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Autobiography of a Yogi

Paramahansa Yogananda

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Yogoda Satsanga Society of India
FOUNDED 1917

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(January 5, 1893 — March 7, 1952)

A Premavatar, "Incarnation of Love" (see page 329n.)

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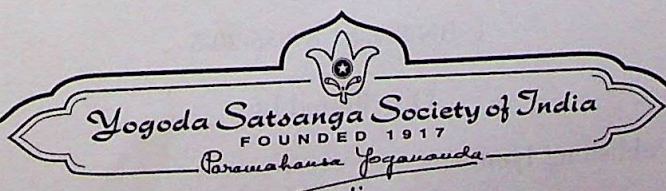
Autobiography of a Yogi

by
Paramahansa Yogananda

With a Preface by
W. Y. Evans-Wentz, M.A., D.Litt., D.Sc.

*"The yogi is deemed greater than body-disciplining ascetics,
greater even than the followers of the path of wisdom or
of the path of action; be thou, O Arjuna, a yogi!"*

— Bhagavad Gita VI:46



offered unto the divine hands of
Sri Sri Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri Maharaj
my blessed, adored, and worshipful
Gurudeva

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to Miss L. V. Pratt [Tara Mata] for her long editorial labours over the manuscript of this book. My thanks are due also to Mr. C. Richard Wright for permission to use extracts from his Indian travel diary. To Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz I am grateful not only for his Preface, but also for suggestions and encouragement.

PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

October 28, 1945

Worldwide acclaim for *Autobiography of a Yogi*

"Among the thousands of books that are published every year, there are those that entertain, those that instruct, those that edify. A reader can consider himself fortunate if he finds one that does all three. *Autobiography of a Yogi* is rarer still — it is a book that opens windows of the mind and spirit." — *India Journal*

"A rare account." — *New York Times*

"These pages reveal, with incomparable strength and clarity, a fascinating life, a personality of such unheard-of greatness that from beginning to end the reader is left breathless....In these pages is undeniable proof that only the mental and spiritual striving of man has lasting value, and that he can conquer all material obstacles by inner strength....We must credit this important biography with the power to bring about a spiritual revolution."

— *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tagespost, Germany*

"...a monumental work." — *Sheffield Telegraph, England*

"Sheer revelation...intensely human account...should help the human race to understand itself better...autobiography at its very best...breathhtaking...this book comes at a propitious time...told with delightful wit and compelling sincerity...as fascinating as any novel."

— *News-Sentinel, Indiana, USA*

"The contents of this book are unusual....The philosophical passages are extremely interesting. Yogananda is on a spiritual plane above religious differences." — *China Weekly Review, Shanghai*

"In a very readable style...Yogananda presents a convincing case for yoga, and those who 'came to scoff' may remain 'to pray.'"

— *San Francisco Chronicle*

"A fascinating and clearly annotated study." — *Newsweek*

"One of the deepest and most important messages of this century." — *Neve Telta Zeitung, Austria*

"One of the most charmingly simple and self-revealing of life-stories...a veritable treasure house of learning....The great personalities one meets in these pages...return to memory as friends endowed

with rich spiritual wisdom, and one of the greatest of these is the God-intoxicated author himself....Remarkable...a rich glimpse of a great soul."

— *Dr. Anna von Helmholtz-Phelan, University of Minnesota, USA*

"Whether Yogananda talks about deathless saints and miraculous healings or whether he transmits Indian wisdom and yoga science, the reader is enthralled." — *Die Weltwoche, Zurich, Switzerland*

"It is a book by which a reader....will see his horizon of thoughts enlarged into the infinite, and will realise that his heart is capable of beating for all human beings, irrespective of colour and race. It is a book which can be called inspired." — *Eleftheria, Greece*

"In [Yogananda's] celebrated *Autobiography of a Yogi*, he offers a stunning account of the 'cosmic consciousness' reached on the upper levels of yogic practice, and numerous interesting perspectives on human nature from the yogic and Vedantic points of view."

— *Robert S. Ellwood, Ph.D., School of Religion, University of Southern California*

"This renewed contact with the Yogi-sphere, its mental superiority to material reality, and its spiritual discipline, was very instructive for me, and I am grateful to you for granting me some insight into this fascinating world." — *Thomas Mann, Nobel Prize winner*

"Paramahansa Yogananda is....a man whose inspiration has been reverently received in all corners of the globe."

— *Rider's Review, London*

"The experience of meeting Paramahansa Yogananda is etched in my memory as one of the unforgettable events in my life....The impact of seeing him was incalculable....As I looked into his face, my eyes were almost dazzled by a radiance — a light of spirituality that literally shone from him. His infinite gentleness, his gracious kindness, enveloped me like warm sunshine....I could see that his understanding and insight extended to the most mundane of problems, even though he was a man of Spirit. In him I found a true ambassador of India, carrying and spreading the essence of India's ancient wisdom to the world."

— *Dr. Binay R. Sen, former Ambassador of India to USA*

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PREFACE

By W. Y. Evans-Wentz, M.A., D. Litt., D.Sc.
Jesus College, Oxford

Author and translator of many classic works on yoga and the wisdom traditions of the East, including *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*, and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

The value of Yogananda's *Autobiography* is greatly enhanced by the fact that it is one of the few books in English about the wise men of India which have been written, not by a journalist or foreigner, but by one of their own race and training—in short, a book *about* yogis *by* a yogi. As an eyewitness recountal of the extraordinary lives and powers of modern Hindu saints, the book has importance both timely and timeless. To its illustrious author, whom I have had the pleasure of knowing in both India and America, may every reader render due appreciation and gratitude. His unusual life document is certainly one of the most revealing of the depths of the Hindu mind and heart, and of the spiritual wealth of India, ever to be published in the West.

It has been my privilege to meet one of the sages whose life history is herein narrated—Sri Yukteswar Giri. A likeness of the venerable saint appeared as part of the frontispiece of my *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*.^{*} It was at Puri, in Orissa, on the Bay of Bengal, that I encountered Sri Yukteswar. He was then the head of a quiet *ashrama* near the seashore there, and was chiefly occupied in the spiritual training of a group of youthful disciples. He expressed keen interest in the welfare of the people of the United States and of all the Americas, and of England, too, and questioned me concerning the distant activities, particularly those in California, of his chief disciple, Paramahansa Yogananda, whom he dearly loved, and whom he had sent, in 1920, as his emissary to the West.

^{*}Oxford University Press, 1958.

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Sri Yukteswar was of gentle mien and voice, of pleasing presence, and worthy of the veneration that his followers spontaneously accorded to him. Every person who knew him, whether of his own community or not, held him in the highest esteem. I vividly recall his tall, straight, ascetic figure, robed in the saffron-coloured garb of one who has renounced worldly quests, as he stood at the entrance of the hermitage to give me welcome. His hair was long and somewhat curly, and his face bearded. His body was muscularly firm, but slender and well-formed, and his step energetic. He had chosen as his place of earthly abode the holy city of Puri, whither multitudes of pious Hindus, representative of every province of India, come daily on pilgrimage to the famed Temple of Jagannath, "Lord of the World." It was at Puri that Sri Yukteswar closed his mortal eyes, in 1936, to the scenes of this transitory state of being and passed on, knowing that his incarnation had been carried to a triumphant completion.

I am glad, indeed, to be able to record this testimony to the high character and holiness of Sri Yukteswar. Content to remain afar from the multitude, he gave himself unreservedly and in tranquillity to that ideal life which Paramahansa Yogananda, his disciple, has now described for the ages.

INTRODUCTION

"The experience of meeting Paramahansa Yogananda is etched in my memory as one of the unforgettable events of my life.... As I looked into his face, my eyes were almost dazzled by a radiance — a light of spirituality that literally shone from him. His infinite gentleness, his gracious kindness, enveloped me like warm sunshine.... I could see that his understanding and insight extended to the most mundane of problems, even though he was a man of Spirit. In him I found a true ambassador of India, carrying and spreading the essence of India's ancient wisdom to the world."

— Dr. Binay R. Sen, former Ambassador
of India to the United States

To those who were personally acquainted with Paramahansa Yogananda, his own life and being were convincing testimony to the power and authenticity of the ancient wisdom he presented to the world. Countless readers of his autobiography have attested to the presence in its pages of that same light of spiritual authority that radiated from his person. Hailed as a masterpiece when it first appeared in print more than sixty years ago, the book set forth not only the story of a life of unmistakable greatness but a fascinating introduction to the spiritual thought of the East—especially its unique science of direct personal communion with God—opening up to the Western public a realm of knowledge hitherto accessible only to a few.

Today *Autobiography of a Yogi* is recognized around the world as a classic of spiritual literature. In this introduction, we would like to share some of the book's extraordinary history.



The writing of the work had been prophesied long ago. One of the seminal figures in the renaissance of yoga in modern times, the revered nineteenth-century master Lahiri Mahasaya, had foretold: "About fifty years after my passing, an account of my life will be written because of a deep interest in yoga that will arise in the

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West. The message of yoga will encircle the globe. It will aid in establishing the brotherhood of man: a unity based on humanity's direct perception of the One Father."

Many years later, Lahiri Mahasaya's exalted disciple Swami Sri Yukteswar related this prophecy to Sri Yogananda. "You must do your part in spreading that message," he declared, "and in writing that sacred life."

It was in 1945, exactly fifty years after Lahiri Mahasaya's passing, that Paramahansa Yogananda completed his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which amply fulfilled both of his guru's injunctions: providing, the first detailed presentation in English of Lahiri Mahasaya's remarkable life, and introducing to a world audience India's age-old science of the soul.



The creation of *Autobiography of a Yogi* was a project that Paramahansa Yogananda worked on over a period of many years. Sri Daya Mata, one of his earliest and closest disciples,* recalls:

"When I came to Mount Washington in 1931, Paramahansaji had already begun to work on the *Autobiography*. Once when I was in his study attending to some secretarial duties, I was privileged to see one of the first chapters he wrote—it was on 'The Tiger Swami.' He asked me to save it, and explained that it would be going into a book he was writing. Most of the book was composed later, between 1937 and 1945."

From June 1935 through October 1936, Sri Yogananda had made a return trip to India (via Europe and Palestine) for a last visit with his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar. While there, he had compiled much factual data for the *Autobiography*, as well as stories about some of the saints and sages whom he had known and whose lives he was to describe so memorably in the book. "I had never forgotten Sri Yukteswar's request that I write the life of Lahiri Mahasaya," he later wrote. "During my stay in India I was taking

* Sri Daya Mata joined the monastic community Paramahansa Yogananda had established atop Mount Washington, overlooking the city of Los Angeles, in 1931. She has served as president of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship since 1955.

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every opportunity to contact direct disciples and relatives of the Yogavatar. Recording their conversations in voluminous notes, I verified facts and dates, and collected photographs, old letters, and documents."

Upon his return to the United States at the end of 1936, he began to spend much of his time at the hermitage that had been built for him in his absence, in Encinitas on the southern California coast. It proved to be an ideal place to concentrate on completing the book he had begun years before.

"Still vivid in my memory are the days spent in that peaceful seaside hermitage," recounts Sri Daya Mata. "He had so many other responsibilities and commitments that he was not able to work on the *Autobiography* every day; but in general he devoted the evenings to it, and whatever free time he could spare. Beginning around 1939 or '40, he was able to concentrate full time on the book. And full time it was—from early morning until early morning! A small group of us disciples—Tara Mata; my sister, Ananda Mata; Sraddha Mata; and myself—were present to assist him. After each part was typed, he would give it to Tara Mata, who served as his editor.

"What treasured memories! As he wrote, he relived inwardly the sacred experiences he was recording. His divine intent was to share the joy and revelations encountered in the company of saints and great masters and in one's own personal realization of the Divine. Often he would pause for a time, his gaze uplifted and his body motionless, rapt in the *samadhi* state of deep communion with God. The whole room would be filled with a tremendously powerful aura of divine love. For us disciples, merely to be present at such times was to be lifted into a higher state of consciousness.

"Finally, in 1945, came the jubilant day of the book's completion. Paramahansaji wrote the last words, 'Lord, thou hast given this monk a large family'; then laid down his pen and joyously exclaimed:

"All done; it is finished. This book will change the lives of millions. It will be my messenger when I am gone."



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It then became Tara Mata's responsibility to find a publisher. Paramahansa Yogananda had met Tara Mata while conducting a series of lectures and classes in San Francisco in 1924. Possessed of rare spiritual insight, she became one of the small circle of his most advanced disciples. He held her editorial abilities in highest esteem, and used to say that she had one of the most brilliant minds of anyone he had ever met. He appreciated her vast knowledge and understanding of India's scriptural wisdom, and remarked on one occasion: "Excepting my great guru, Sri Yukteswarji, there is no one with whom I have more enjoyed talking of Indian philosophy."

Tara Mata took the manuscript to New York City. But finding a publisher was not an easy task. As can often be observed, the true stature of a great work may not at first be recognized by those of a more conventional cast of mind. Despite the newly born atomic age having enlarged the collective consciousness of humanity with a growing understanding of the subtle unity of matter, energy, and thought, the publishers of the day were hardly ready for such chapters as "Materializing a palace in the Himalayas" and "The Saint with Two Bodies"!

For a year, Tara Mata lived in a sparsely furnished, unheated cold-water flat while making the rounds of publishing houses. At last she was able to send a cable with news of success. The Philosophical Library, a respected New York publisher, had accepted the *Autobiography* for publication. "What [she] has done for this book I cannot begin to describe...", Sri Yogananda said. "But for her, the book would never have gone through."

Shortly before Christmas 1946, the long-awaited books reached Mount Washington.



The book was greeted by readers and by the world press with an outpouring of appreciative praise. "There has been nothing before, written in English or in any other language, like this presentation of Yoga," wrote Columbia University Press in its *Review of Religions*. The *New York Times* proclaimed it "a rare account." *Newsweek* reported, "Yogananda's book is rather an autobiography

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of the soul than of the body...It is a fascinating and clearly annotated study of a religious way of life, ingenuously described in the lush style of the Orient."

With the translation of the book into other languages, many more reviews began appearing in newspapers and periodicals around the world.

A second edition was quickly prepared, and in 1951 a third. In addition to revising and updating portions of the text, and deleting some passages describing organizational activities and plans that were no longer current, Paramahansa Yogananda added a final chapter—one of the longest in the book—covering the years 1940–1951. In a footnote to the new chapter, he wrote, "Much new material in Chapter 49 has been added to the third edition of this book (1951). In response to requests made by a number of readers of the first two editions, I have answered, in this chapter, various questions about India, yoga, and Vedic philosophy."*



"I have been intensely moved." Sri Yogananda wrote in an Author's Note to the 1951 edition, "to receive letters from thousands of readers. Their comments and the fact that the book has been translated into many languages, encourages me to believe

* Additional revisions made by Paramahansa Yogananda were included in the seventh edition (1956), as described in a Publisher's Note to this edition:

"This 1956 American edition contains revisions made by Paramahansa Yogananda in 1949 for the London, England, edition; and additional revisions made by the author in 1951. In a 'Note to the London Edition,' dated October 25, 1949, Paramahansa Yogananda wrote: 'The arrangement for a London edition of this book has given me an opportunity to revise, and slightly to enlarge, the text. Besides new material in the last chapter, I have added a number of footnotes in which I have answered questions sent me by readers of the American edition.'

"Later revisions, made by the author in 1951, were intended to appear in the fourth (1952) American edition. At that time the rights in *Autobiography of a Yogi* were vested in a New York publishing house. In 1946 in New York each page of the book had been made into an electrotype plate. Consequently, to add even a comma requires that the metal plate of an entire page be cut apart and resoldered with a new line containing the desired comma. Because of the expense involved in resoldering many plates, the New York publisher did not include in the fourth edition the author's 1951 revisions.

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that the West has found in these pages an affirmative answer to the question: 'Has the ancient science of Yoga any worthwhile place in the life of the modern man?'"

With the passing years "thousands of readers" became millions, and the enduring and universal appeal of *Autobiography of a Yogi* has become increasingly apparent. Sixty years after the book was first published, it is still appearing on metaphysical and inspirational best-seller lists. A rare phenomenon! Available in many translations, it is now being used in colleges and universities all over the world in courses ranging from Eastern philosophy and religion to English literature, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, and even business management. As predicted more than a century ago by Lahiri Mahasaya, the message of yoga and its ancient tradition of meditation has indeed encircled the globe.

"Perhaps best known for his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which has inspired countless millions around the world," writes the metaphysical journal *New Frontier* (October 1986), "Paramahansa Yogananda, like Gandhi, brought spirituality into the mainstream of society. It is reasonable to say that Yogananda did more to put the word 'yoga' into our vocabulary than any other person."

The respected scholar Dr. David Frawley, Director of the American Institute of Vedic studies, writing in the bimonthly journal *Yoga International* (October/November 1996), states,

"In late 1953 Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) bought from the New York publisher all rights in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. SRF reprinted the book in 1954 and 1955 (fifth and sixth editions); but during those two years other duties prevented the SRF editorial department from undertaking the formidable task of incorporating the author's revisions on the electrotape plates. The work, however, has been accomplished in time for the seventh edition."

After 1956, some further editorial revisions were made, in accordance with guidance Tara Mata had received from Paramahansa Yogananda before his passing.

Early editions of *Autobiography of a Yogi* gave the author's title as "Paramhansa," reflecting the common Bengali practice of omitting silent or near-silent *a*'s in spelling. To ensure that the sacred significance of this Veda-based title would be conveyed, in later editions the standard Sanskrit transliteration has been used: "Paramahansa," from *parama*, "highest or supreme" and *hansa*, "swan"—signifying one who has attained highest realization of his true divine Self, and of the unity of that Self with Spirit.

“Yogananda can be said to be the father of yoga in the West—not the mere physical yoga that has become popular, but the spiritual yoga, the science of Self-realization that is the real meaning of yoga.”

Professor Ashutosh Das, Ph.D., D. Litt., of Calcutta University, declares, *Autobiography of a Yogi* is regarded as an Upanishad of the new age.... It has satisfied the spiritual thirst of truth-seekers throughout the world. We in India have watched with wonder and fascination the phenomenal spread of the popularity of this book about India's saints and philosophy. We have felt great satisfaction and pride that the immortal nectar of India's *Sanatana Dharma*, the eternal laws of truth, has been stored in the golden chalice of *Autobiography of a Yogi*.”

Even in the former Soviet Union, the book apparently made a deep impression on the relative few who had access to it under the communist regime. Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer, former judge of India's Supreme Court, tells of visiting a town near St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) and asking a group of professors there “whether they had thought about what happens when man dies.... One of the professors quietly went inside and came out with a book—*Autobiography of a Yogi*. I was surprised. In a country ruled by the materialistic philosophy of Marx and Lenin, here is an official of a government institute showing me Paramahansa Yogananda's book! ‘Please realize that the spirit of India is not alien to us,’ he said. ‘We accept the authenticity of everything recorded in this book.’”

“Among the thousands of books that are published each year,” concluded an article in *India Journal* (April 21, 1995), “there are those that entertain, those that instruct, those that edify. A reader can consider himself fortunate if he finds one that does all three. *Autobiography of a Yogi* is a rarer still—it is a book that opens windows of the mind and spirit.”

In recent years, the book has been hailed by booksellers, reviewers, and readers alike as one of the most influential spiritual books of modern times. In a 1999 HarperCollins panel of authors and scholars, *Autobiography of a Yogi* was selected as one of the “100 Best Spiritual Books of the Century,” and in his *50 Spiritual Classics* which was released in 2005, Tom Butler-Bowden wrote that the

Autobiography of a Yogi

book was “justifiably celebrated as one of the most entertaining and enlightening spiritual books ever written.”



In the book’s final chapter, Paramahansa Yogananda writes of the profound assurance which has been affirmed by saints and sages of all the world’s religions down through the ages:

“God is Love; His plan for creation can be rooted only in love. Does not that simple thought, rather than erudite reasonings, offer solace to the human heart? Every saint who has penetrated to the core of Reality has testified that a divine universal plan exists and that it is beautiful and full of joy.”

As *Autobiography of a Yogi* continues in its second half-century, it is our hope that all readers of this inspiring work — those who are encountering it for the first time as well as those for whom it has become a long-cherished companion on life’s path — will find their own souls opening to a deeper faith in the transcendent truth that lies at the heart of life’s seeming mysteries.

YOGODA SATSANGA SOCIETY OF INDIA/
SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP

Los Angeles, California
July 2007



THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY OF SRI SRI PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

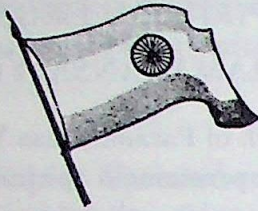
A century after the birth of Paramahansa Yogananda, he has come to be recognized as one of the preeminent spiritual figures of our time; and the influence of his life and work continues to grow. Many of the religious and philosophical concepts and methods he introduced decades ago are now finding expression in education, psychology, business, medicine, and other spheres of endeavour — contributing in far-reaching ways to a more integrated, humane, and spiritual vision of human life.

The fact that Paramahansa Yoganandaji's teachings are being interpreted and creatively applied in many different fields, as well as by exponents of diverse philosophical and metaphysical movements, points not only to the great practical utility of what he taught, but also to the need for some means of ensuring that the spiritual legacy he left not be diluted, fragmented, or distorted with the passing of time.

With the increasing variety of sources of information about Paramahansa Yogananda, readers sometimes inquire how they can be certain that a publication accurately presents his life and teachings. In response to these inquiries, we would like to explain that Paramahansaji founded Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship to disseminate his teachings and to preserve their purity and integrity for future generations. He personally chose and trained those close disciples who head the Yogoda Satsanga Society/Self-Realization Fellowship Publications Council, and gave them specific guidelines for the preparation and publishing of his lectures, writings, and *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons*. The members of the YSS/SRF Publications Council honour these guidelines as a sacred trust, in order that the universal message of this beloved world teacher may live on in its original power and authenticity.

The Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship name and the YSS/SRF emblem (shown above) were originated by Paramahansaji to identify the organization he founded to carry on his worldwide spiritual and humanitarian work. These appear on all YSS/SRF books, audio and video recordings, films, and other publications, assuring the reader that the work originates with the organization founded by Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda and faithfully conveys his teachings as he himself intended they be given.

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INDIA/SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP



THE ETERNAL LAW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The flag of a newly independent India (1947) has bands of deep saffron, white and dark green. The navy blue *Dharma Chakra* ("Wheel of the Law") is a reproduction of the design appearing on the Sarnath Stone Pillar erected in the third century B.C. by Emperor Asoka.

The wheel was chosen as a symbol of the eternal law of righteousness; and, incidentally, as an honour to the memory of the world's most illustrious monarch. "His reign of forty years is without a parallel in history," writes the English historian, H. G. Rawlinson. "He has been compared at various times to Marcus Aurelius, St. Paul, and Constantine.... 250 years before Christ, Asoka had the courage to express his horror and remorse at the results of a successful campaign, and deliberately to renounce war as a means of policy."

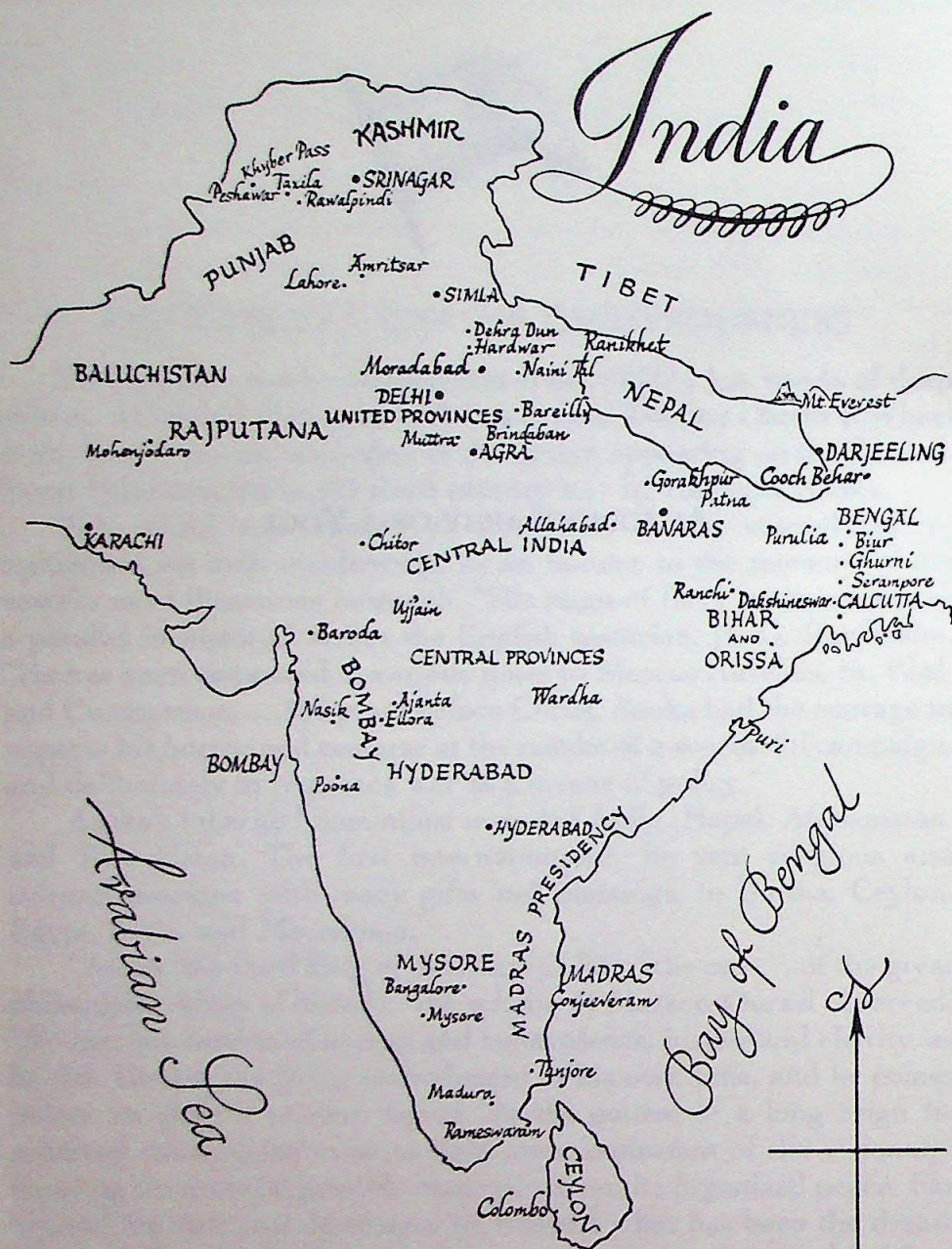
Asoka's inherited dominions included India, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan. The first internationalist, he sent religious and cultural missions, with many gifts and blessings, to Burma, Ceylon, Egypt, Syria, and Macedonia.

"Asoka, the third king of the Maurya line, was one ... of the great philosopher-kings of history," the scholar P. Masson-Oursel observed. "No one has combined energy and benevolence, justice and charity, as he did. He was the living embodiment of his own time, and he comes before us quite a modern figure. In the course of a long reign he achieved what seems to us to be a mere aspiration of the visionary: enjoying the greatest possible material power, he organized peace. Far beyond his own vast dominions he realized what has been the dream of some religions—universal order, an order embracing mankind."

"*Dharma* (cosmic law) aims at the happiness of all creatures." In his rock edicts and stone pillars, surviving to this day, Asoka lovingly advises the subjects of his far-flung empire that happiness is rooted in morality and godliness.

Modern India, aspiring to renew the eminence and prosperity that for millenniums enveloped the land, pays homage in her new flag to the memory of Asoka, sovereign "dear to the gods."

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI



(Prior to 1947. Sections in the northwest now compose Pakistan; in the northeast, Bangladesh.)

CHAPTER 1

My Parents and Early Life



The characteristic features of Indian culture have long been a search for ultimate verities and the concomitant disciple-guru* relationship.

My own path led to a Christlike sage; his beautiful life was chiselled for the ages. He was one of the great masters who are India's truest wealth. Emerging in every generation, they have bulwarked their land against the fate of ancient Egypt and Babylonia.

I find my earliest memories covering the anachronistic features of a previous incarnation. Clear recollections came to me of a distant life in which I had been a yogi† amid the Himalayan snows. These glimpses of the past, by some dimensionless link, also afforded me a glimpse of the future.

I still remember the helpless humiliations of infancy. I was resentfully conscious of being unable to walk and to express myself freely. Prayerful surges arose within me as I realized my bodily impotence. My strong emotional life was mentally expressed in words of many languages. Amid the inward confusion of tongues, I gradually became accustomed to hearing the Bengali syllables of

* Spiritual teacher. The *Guru Gita* (verse 17) aptly describes the guru as "dispeller of darkness" (from *gu*, "darkness," and *ru*, "that which dispels").

† Practitioner of yoga, "union," ancient science of meditation on God. (See chapter 26: "The Science of Kriya Yoga.")

Autobiography of a Yogi

my people. The beguiling scope of an infant's mind! adultly considered to be limited to toys and toes.

Psychological ferment and my unresponsive body brought me to many obstinate crying spells. I recall the general family bewilderment at my distress. Happier memories, too, crowd in on me: my mother's caresses, and my first attempts at lisping phrase and toddling step. These early triumphs, usually forgotten quickly, are yet a natural basis of self-confidence.

My far-reaching memories are not unique. Many yogis are known to have retained their self-consciousness without interruption by the dramatic transition to and from "life" and "death." If man be solely a body, its loss indeed ends his identity. But if prophets down the millenniums spake with truth, man is essentially a soul, incorporeal and omnipresent.

Although odd, clear memories of infancy are not extremely rare. During travels in numerous lands, I have heard very early recollections from the lips of veracious men and women.

I was born on January 5, 1893, in Gorakhpur in northeastern India near the Himalaya Mountains. There my first eight years were passed. We were eight children: four boys and four girls. I, Mukunda Lal Ghosh,* was the second son and the fourth child.

Father and Mother were Bengalis, of the *Kshatriya* caste. Both were blessed with saintly nature. Their mutual love, tranquil and dignified, never expressed itself frivolously. A perfect parental harmony was the calm centre for the revolving tumult of eight young lives.

Father, Bhagabati Charan Ghosh, was kind, grave, at times stern. Loving him dearly, we children yet observed a certain reverential distance. An outstanding mathematician and logician, he was guided principally by his intellect. But Mother was a queen of hearts, and taught us only through love. After her death, Father displayed more of his inner tenderness. I noticed then that his gaze

* My name was changed to Yogananda in 1915 when I entered the ancient monastic Swami Order. In 1935 my guru bestowed on me the further religious title of *Paramahansa* (see pp. 222 and 387).

My Parents and Early Life

often seemed to be metamorphosed into my mother's gaze.

In Mother's presence we children made an early bittersweet acquaintance with the scriptures. Mother would resourcefully summon from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* suitable tales to meet the exigencies of discipline; on these occasions chastisement and instruction went hand in hand.

As a gesture of respect for Father, in the afternoons Mother would dress us children carefully to welcome him home from the office. He held a position, similar to that of a vice-president, in one of India's large companies: Bengal-Nagpur Railway. His work involved travelling; our family lived in several cities during my childhood.

Mother held an open hand toward the needy. Father was also kindly disposed, but his respect for law and order extended to the budget. One fortnight Mother spent, in feeding the poor, more than Father's monthly income.

"All I ask, please," Father said, "is that you keep your charities within a reasonable limit." Even a gentle rebuke from her husband was grievous to Mother. Not hinting to the children at any disagreement, she ordered a hackney carriage.

"Good-bye, I am going away to my mother's home." Ancient ultimatum!

We broke into astounded lamentations. Our maternal uncle arrived opportunely; he whispered to Father some sage counsel, garnered no doubt from the ages. After Father had made a few conciliatory remarks, Mother happily dismissed the cab. Thus ended the only trouble I ever noticed between my parents. But I recall a characteristic discussion.

"Please give me ten rupees for a hapless woman who has just arrived at the house." Mother's smile had its own persuasion.

"Why ten rupees? One is enough." Father added a justification: "When my father and grandparents died suddenly, I had my first experience of poverty. My only breakfast, before walking miles to my school, was a small banana. Later, at the university, I was in such need that I applied to a wealthy judge for aid of one rupee per month. He declined, remarking that even a rupee is important."

"How bitterly you recall the denial of that rupee!" Mother's heart had an instant logic. "Do you want this woman also to remember

Autobiography of a Yogi

painfully your refusal of ten rupees, which she needs urgently?"

"You win!" With the immemorial gesture of vanquished husbands, he opened his wallet. "Here is a ten-rupee note. Give it to her with my goodwill."

Father tended first to say "No" to any new proposal. His attitude toward the stranger who so readily had won Mother's sympathy was an example of his customary caution. An aversion to instant acceptance is really only honouring the principle of "due reflection." I always found Father reasonable and evenly balanced in his judgments. If I could bolster up my numerous requests with one or two good arguments, he would invariably put within my reach the coveted goal — whether a vacation trip or a new motorcycle.

Father was a strict disciplinarian to his children in their early years, but his attitude toward himself was truly Spartan. He never visited the theatre, for instance, but sought his recreation in various spiritual practices and in reading the Bhagavad Gita. Shunning all luxuries, he would cling to one old pair of shoes until they were useless. His sons bought automobiles after they came into popular use, but Father was content with the trolley car for his daily ride to the office.

Father was not interested in the accumulation of money for the sake of power. On one occasion, after he had organized the Calcutta Urban Bank, he refused to benefit himself by holding any of its shares. He had simply wished to perform a civic duty in his spare time.

Several years after Father had retired on a pension, an accountant from England came to India to examine the books of Bengal-Nagpur Railway. The amazed investigator discovered that Father had never applied for overdue bonuses.

"He did the work of three men!" the accountant told the company. "He has rupees 1,25,000 (\$41,250) owing to him as back compensation." The treasurer sent Father a cheque for that amount. My parent thought so little about the matter that he forgot to mention it to the family. Much later he was questioned by my youngest brother Bishnu, who had noticed the large deposit on a bank statement.

"Why be elated by material profit?" Father replied. "The one who pursues a goal of even-mindedness is neither jubilant with gain

My Parents and Early Life

nor depressed by loss. He knows that man arrives penniless in this world, and departs without a single rupee."

Early in their married life, my parents became disciples of a great master, Lahiri Mahasaya of Banaras. This association strengthened Father's naturally ascetical temperament. Mother once made a remarkable admission to my eldest sister Roma: "Your father and I sleep together as man and wife only once a year, for the purpose of having children."

Father met Lahiri Mahasaya through Abinash Babu, an employee of a branch line of Bengal-Nagpur Railway. In Gorakhpur, Abinash Babu instructed my young ears with engrossing tales of many Indian saints. He invariably concluded with a tribute to the superior glories of his own guru.

"Did you ever hear of the extraordinary circumstances under which your father became a disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya?" It was on a lazy summer afternoon, as Abinash and I sat together in the compound of my home, that he put this intriguing question. I shook my head with a smile of anticipation.

"Years ago, before you were born, I asked my superior officer — your father — to give me a week's leave from my office duties in order to visit my guru in Banaras. Your father ridiculed my plan.

"Are you going to become a religious fanatic?" he inquired. 'Concentrate on your office work if you want to forge ahead.'

"Sadly walking home along a woodland path that day, I met your father in a palanquin. He dismissed his servants and conveyance, and fell into step beside me. Seeking to console me, he pointed out the advantages of striving for worldly success. But I heard him listlessly. My heart was repeating: 'Lahiri Mahasaya! I cannot live without seeing you!'

"Our path took us to the edge of a tranquil field, where the rays of the late afternoon sun were crowning the tall ripple of the wild grass. We paused in admiration. There in the field, only a few yards from us, the form of my great guru suddenly appeared!*

* The phenomenal powers possessed by great masters are explained in chapter 30, "The Law of Miracles."

Autobiography of a Yogi

“‘Bhagabati, you are too hard on your employee!’ His voice was resonant in our astounded ears. He vanished as mysteriously as he had come. On my knees I was exclaiming, ‘Lahiri Mahasaya! Lahiri Mahasaya!’ For a few moments your father was motionless with stupefaction.

“‘Abinash, not only do I give *you* leave, but I give *myself* leave to start for Banaras tomorrow. I must know this great Lahiri Mahasaya, who is able to materialize himself at will in order to intercede for you! I will take my wife and ask this master to initiate us in his spiritual path. Will you guide us to him?’

“‘Of course.’ Joy filled me at the miraculous answer to my prayer, and the quick, favourable turn of events.

“The next evening your parents and I entrained for Banaras. Reaching there on the following day, we took a horse cart for some distance, then had to walk through narrow lanes to my guru’s secluded home. Entering his little parlour, we bowed before the master, enlocked in his habitual lotus posture. He blinked his piercing eyes and levelled them on your father. ‘Bhagabati, you are too hard on your employee!’ His words were the same as those he had used two days before in the grassy field. He added, ‘I am glad that you have permitted Abinash to visit me, and that you and your wife have accompanied him.’

“To their joy, he initiated your parents in the spiritual practice of *Kriya Yoga*.^{*} Your father and I, as brother disciples, have been close friends since the memorable day of the vision. Lahiri Mahasaya took a definite interest in your own birth. Your life shall surely be linked with his own; the master’s blessing never fails.”

Lahiri Mahasaya left this world shortly after I had entered it. His picture, in an ornate frame, always graced our family altar in the various cities to which Father was transferred by his office. Many a morning and evening found Mother and me meditating before an improvised shrine, offering flowers dipped in fragrant sandalwood paste. With frankincense and myrrh as well as our

^{*} A yogic technique, taught by Lahiri Mahasaya, whereby the sensory tumult is stilled, permitting man to achieve an ever-increasing identity with cosmic consciousness. (See chapter 26.)



BHAGABATI CHARAN GHOSH (1853 - 1942)

Father of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda;
disciple of Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya

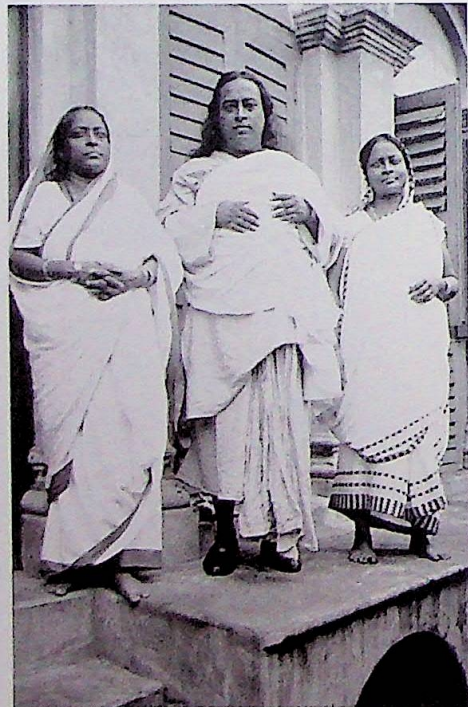


GYANA PRABHA GHOSH (1868 - 1904)

Mother of Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda;
disciple of Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya



(Left) Sri Yoganandaji at age six. (Right) Jitendra Mazumdar, Yoganandaji's companion in the "penniless test" in Brindaban (chapter 11).



(Left) Yoganandaji's elder sister Uma as a young girl, Gorakhpur. (Right) Eldest sister Roma (left) and younger sister Nalini, with Yoganandaji, Calcutta, 1935

My Parents and Early Life

united devotions, we honoured the divinity that had found full expression in Lahiri Mahasaya.

His picture had a surpassing influence over my life. As I grew, the thought of the master grew with me. In meditation I would often see his photographic image emerge from its small frame and, taking a living form, sit before me. When I attempted to touch the feet of his luminous body, it would change and again become the picture. As childhood slipped into boyhood, I found Lahiri Mahasaya transformed in my mind from a little image, cribbed in a frame, to a living, enlightening presence. I frequently prayed to him in moments of trial or confusion, finding within me his solacing direction.

At first I grieved because he was no longer physically living. As I began to discover his secret omnipresence, I lamented no more. He had often written to those of his disciples who were over-anxious to see him: "Why come to view my flesh and bones, when I am ever within range of your *kutastha* (spiritual sight)?"

At about the age of eight I was blessed with a wonderful healing through the photograph of Lahiri Mahasaya. This experience gave intensification to my love. While at our family estate in Ichapur, Bengal, I was stricken with Asiatic cholera. My life was despaired of; the doctors could do nothing. At my bedside, Mother frantically motioned me to look at Lahiri Mahasaya's picture on the wall above my head.

"Bow to him mentally!" She knew I was too feeble even to lift my hands in salutation. "If you really show your devotion and inwardly kneel before him, your life will be spared!"

I gazed at his photograph and saw there a blinding light, enveloping my body and the entire room. My nausea and other uncontrollable symptoms disappeared; I was well. At once I felt strong enough to bend over and touch Mother's feet in appreciation of her immeasurable faith in her guru. Mother pressed her head repeatedly against the little picture.

"O Omnipresent Master, I thank thee that thy light hath healed my son!"

I realized that she too had witnessed the luminous blaze through which I had instantly recovered from a usually fatal disease.

One of my most precious possessions is that same photograph.

Autobiography of a Yogi

Given to Father by Lahiri Mahasaya himself, it carries a holy vibration. The picture had a miraculous origin. I heard the story from Father's brother disciple, Kali Kumar Roy.

It appears that the master had an aversion to being photographed. Over his protest, a picture was once taken of him and a group of devotees, including Kali Kumar Roy. It was an amazed photographer who discovered that the plate, which had clear images of all the disciples, revealed nothing more than a blank space in the centre where he had reasonably expected to find the outlines of Lahiri Mahasaya. The phenomenon was widely discussed.

A student who was an expert photographer, Ganga Dhar Babu, boasted that the fugitive figure would not escape him. The next morning, as the guru sat in lotus posture on a wooden bench with a screen behind him, Ganga Dhar Babu arrived with his equipment. Taking every precaution for success, he greedily exposed twelve plates. On each one he soon found the imprint of the wooden bench and screen, but once again the master's form was missing.

With tears and shattered pride, Ganga Dhar Babu sought out his guru. It was many hours before Lahiri Mahasaya broke his silence with a pregnant comment:

"I am Spirit. Can your camera reflect the omnipresent Invisible?"

"I see it cannot! But, Holy Sir, I lovingly desire a picture of your bodily temple. My vision has been narrow; until today I did not realize that in you the Spirit fully dwells."

"Come, then, tomorrow morning. I will pose for you."

Again the photographer focused his camera. This time the sacred figure, not cloaked with mysterious imperceptibility, was sharp on the plate. The master never posed for another picture; at least, I have seen none.

The photograph is reproduced in this book.* Lahiri Mahasaya's

* See photo section I page 9. See also painting of Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya on photo section I page 10. While in India in 1935-36, Paramahansa Yogananda instructed a Bengali artist to paint this rendering of the original photograph, and later designated it as the formal portrait of Lahiri Mahasaya for use in YSS/SRF publications. (This painting hangs in Paramahansaji's sitting room at Mt. Washington.) (*Publisher's Note*)

My Parents and Early Life

fair features, of a universal cast, hardly suggest to what race he belonged. The joy of God-communion is slightly revealed in his enigmatic smile. His eyes, half open to denote a nominal interest in the outer world, are also half closed, indicating his absorption in inner bliss. Oblivious of the poor lures of the earth, he was fully awake at all times to the spiritual problems of seekers who approached for his bounty.

Shortly after my healing through the potency of the guru's picture, I had an influential spiritual vision. Sitting on my bed one morning, I fell into a deep reverie.

"What is behind the darkness of closed eyes?" This probing thought came powerfully into my mind. An immense flash of light at once manifested to my inner gaze. Divine shapes of saints, sitting in meditation posture in mountain caves, formed like miniature cinema pictures on the large screen of radiance within my forehead.

"Who are you?" I spoke aloud.

"We are the Himalayan yogis." The celestial response is difficult to describe; my heart was thrilled.

"Ah, I long to go to the Himalayas and become like you!" The vision vanished, but the silvery beams expanded in ever-widening circles to infinity.

"What is this wondrous glow?"

"I am Ishwara.* I am Light." The Voice was as murmuring clouds.

"I want to be one with Thee!"

Out of the slow dwindling of my divine ecstasy, I salvaged a permanent legacy of inspiration to seek God. "He is eternal, ever-new Joy!" This memory persisted long after the day of rapture.

Another early recollection is outstanding; and literally so, for I bear the scar to this day. My elder sister Uma and I were seated in the early morning under a *neem* tree in our Gorakhpur compound. She was helping me in my study of a Bengali primer, what time I could

* A Sanskrit name for the Lord in His aspect of Cosmic Ruler; from the root *ī*, to rule. The Hindu scriptures contain a thousand names for God, each one carrying a different shade of philosophical meaning. The Lord as Ishwara is He by whose will all universes, in orderly cycles, are created and dissolved.

spare my gaze from the nearby parrots eating ripe margosa fruit.

Uma complained of a boil on her leg, and fetched a jar of ointment. I smeared a bit of the salve on my forearm.

"Why do you use medicine on a healthy arm?"

"Well, Sis, I feel I am going to have a boil tomorrow. I am testing your ointment on the spot where the boil will appear."

"You little liar!"

"Sis, don't call me a liar until you see what happens in the morning." Indignation filled me.

Uma, unimpressed, thrice repeated her taunt. An adamant resolution sounded in my voice as I made slow reply.

"By the power of will in me, I say that tomorrow I shall have a fairly large boil in this exact place on my arm; and *your* boil shall swell to twice its present size!"

Morning found me with a stalwart boil on the indicated spot; the dimensions of Uma's boil had doubled. With a shriek, my sister rushed to Mother. "Mukunda has become a necromancer!" Gravely, Mother instructed me never to use the power of words for doing harm. I have always remembered her counsel, and followed it.

My boil was surgically treated. A noticeable scar, left by the doctor's incision, is present today. On my right forearm is a constant reminder of the power in man's sheer word.

Those simple and apparently harmless phrases to Uma, spoken with deep concentration, had possessed sufficient hidden force to explode like bombs and to produce definite, though injurious, effects. I understood later that the explosive vibratory power in speech could be wisely directed to free one's life from difficulties and thus operate without scar or rebuke.*

Our family moved to Lahore in the Punjab. There I acquired a picture of the Divine Mother in the form of the Goddess Kali.† It

* The infinite potencies of sound derive from the Creative Word, *Aum*, the cosmic vibratory power behind all atomic energies. Any word spoken with clear realization and deep concentration has a materializing value. Loud or silent repetition of inspiring words has been found effective in Couéism and similar systems of psychotherapy; the secret lies in the stepping-up of the mind's vibratory rate.

† Kali is a symbol of God in the aspect of eternal Mother Nature.

sanctified a small informal shrine on the balcony of our home. An unequivocal conviction came over me that fulfillment would crown any of my prayers uttered in that sacred spot. Standing there with Uma one day, I watched two boys flying kites over the roofs of two buildings that were separated from our house by an extremely narrow lane.

"Why are you so quiet?" Uma pushed me playfully.

"I am just thinking how wonderful it is that Divine Mother gives me whatever I ask."

"I suppose She would give you those two kites!" My sister laughed derisively.

"Why not?" I began silent prayers for their possession.

Matches are played in India with kites whose strings are covered with glue and ground glass. Each player attempts to sever the string held by his opponent. A freed kite sails over the roofs; there is great fun in catching it. As Uma and I were on a roofed, recessed balcony, it seemed impossible that a loosed kite could come into our hands; its string would naturally dangle over the roof.

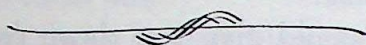
The players across the lane began their match. One string was cut; immediately the kite floated in my direction. Owing to a sudden abatement of the breeze the kite remained stationary for a moment, during which its string became firmly entangled with a cactus plant on top of the opposite house. A long, perfect loop was formed for my seizure. I handed the prize to Uma.

"It was just an extraordinary accident, and not an answer to your prayer. If the other kite comes to you, then I shall believe." Sister's dark eyes conveyed more amazement than her words. I continued my prayers with intensity. A forcible tug by the other player resulted in the abrupt loss of his kite. It headed toward me, dancing in the wind. My helpful assistant, the cactus plant, again secured the kite string in the necessary loop by which I could grasp it. I presented my second trophy to Uma.

"Indeed, Divine Mother listens to you! This is all too uncanny for me!" Sister bolted away like a frightened fawn.

CHAPTER 2

My Mother's Death and the Mystic Amulet



My mother's greatest desire was the marriage of my elder brother. "Ah, when I behold the face of Ananta's wife, I shall find heaven on this earth!" I frequently heard Mother express in these words her strong Indian sentiment for family continuity.

I was about eleven years old at the time of Ananta's betrothal. Mother was in Calcutta, joyously supervising the wedding preparations. Father and I alone remained at our home in Bareilly in northern India, where Father had been transferred after two years at Lahore.

I had previously witnessed the splendour of nuptial rites for my two elder sisters, Roma and Uma; but for Ananta, as the eldest son, plans were truly elaborate. Mother was welcoming numerous relatives, daily arriving in Calcutta from distant homes. She lodged them comfortably in a large, newly acquired house at 50 Amherst Street. Everything was in readiness — the banquet delicacies, the gay throne on which Brother was to be carried to the home of the bride-to-be, the rows of colourful lights, the mammoth cardboard elephants and camels, the English, Scottish, and Indian orchestras, the professional entertainers, the priests for the ancient rituals.

Father and I, in gala spirits, were planning to join the family in

My Mother's Death and the Mystic Amulet

time for the ceremony. Shortly before the great day, however, I had an ominous vision.

It was in Bareilly on a midnight. As I slept beside Father on the piazza of our bungalow, I was awakened by a peculiar flutter of the mosquito netting over the bed. The flimsy curtains parted and I saw the beloved form of my mother.

"Awaken your father!" Her voice was only a whisper. "Take the first available train, at four o'clock this morning. Rush to Calcutta if you would see me!" The wraithlike figure vanished.

"Father, Father! Mother is dying!" The terror in my tone aroused him instantly. I sobbed out the fatal tidings.

"Never mind that hallucination of yours." Father gave his characteristic negation to a new situation. "Your mother is in excellent health. If we get any bad news, we shall leave tomorrow."

"You shall never forgive yourself for not starting now!" Anguish caused me to add bitterly, "Nor shall I ever forgive you!"

The melancholy morning came with explicit words: "Mother dangerously ill; marriage postponed; come at once."

Father and I left distractedly. One of my uncles met us en route at a transfer point. A train thundered toward us, looming with telescopic increase. From my inner tumult, an abrupt determination arose to hurl myself on the railway tracks. Already bereft, I felt, of my mother, I could not endure a world suddenly bare to the bone. I loved Mother as my dearest friend on earth. Her solacing black eyes had been my refuge in the trifling tragedies of childhood.

"Does she yet live?" I stopped for one last question to my uncle.

He was not slow to interpret the desperation in my face. "Of course she is alive!" But I scarcely believed him.

When we reached our Calcutta home, it was only to confront the stunning mystery of death. I collapsed into an almost lifeless state. Years passed before any reconciliation entered my heart. Storming the very gates of heaven, my cries at last summoned the Divine Mother. Her words brought final healing to my suppurating wounds:

"It is I who have watched over thee, life after life, in the tenderness of many mothers. See in My gaze the two black eyes, the

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lost beautiful eyes, thou seekest!"

Father and I returned to Bareilly soon after the crematory rites for the well-beloved. Early every morning I made a pathetic memorial-pilgrimage to a large *sheoli* tree which shaded the smooth, green-gold lawn before our bungalow. In poetical moments, I thought that the white *sheoli* flowers were strewing themselves with a willing devotion over the grassy altar. Mingling tears with the dew, I often observed a strange other-worldly light emerging from the dawn. Intense pangs of longing for God assailed me. I felt powerfully drawn to the Himalayas.

One of my cousins, fresh from a period of travel in the holy hills, visited us in Bareilly. I listened eagerly to his tales about the high mountain abode of yogis and swamis.*

"Let us run away to the Himalayas." My suggestion one day to Dwarka Prasad, the young son of our landlord in Bareilly, fell on unsympathetic ears. He revealed my plan to my elder brother, who had just arrived to see Father. Instead of laughing lightly over this impractical scheme of a small boy, Ananta made it a definite point to ridicule me.

"Where is your orange robe? You can't be a swami without that!"

But I was inexplicably thrilled by his words. They brought me a clear picture: that of myself as a monk, roaming about India. Perhaps they awakened memories of a past life; in any case, I realized with what natural ease I would wear the garb of the anciently founded monastic order.

Chatting one morning with Dwarka, I felt a love for God descending with avalanchelike force. My companion was only partly attentive to the ensuing eloquence, but I was wholeheartedly listening to myself.

I fled that afternoon toward Naini Tal in the Himalayan foothills. Ananta gave determined chase; I was forced to return sadly to Bareilly. The only pilgrimage permitted me was the

* Sanskrit root meaning of *swami* is "he who is one with his Self (*Swa*)."
(See chapter 24.)

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customary one at dawn to the *sheoli* tree. My heart wept for my two lost mothers: one human, one Divine.

The rent left in the family fabric by Mother's death was irreparable. Father never remarried during his nearly forty remaining years. Assuming the difficult role of father-mother to his little flock, he grew noticeably more tender, more approachable. With calmness and insight, he solved the various family problems. After office hours he retired like a hermit to the cell of his room, practising *Kriya Yoga* in a sweet serenity. Long after Mother's death, I attempted to engage an English nurse to attend to details that would make my parent's life more comfortable. But Father shook his head.

"Service to me ended with your mother." His eyes were remote with a lifelong devotion. "I will not accept ministrations from any other woman."

Fourteen months after Mother's passing, I learned that she had left me a momentous message. Ananta had been present at her deathbed and had recorded her words. Though she had asked that the disclosure be made to me in one year, my brother had delayed. He was soon to leave Bareilly for Calcutta, to marry the girl that Mother had chosen for him. One evening he summoned me to his side.

"Mukunda, I have been reluctant to give you strange tidings." Ananta's tone held a note of resignation. "My fear was to inflame your desire to leave home. But in any case you are bristling with divine ardour. When I captured you recently on your way to the Himalayas, I came to a definite resolve. I must not further postpone the fulfilment of my solemn promise." My brother handed me a small box, and delivered Mother's message.

"Let these words be my final blessing, my beloved son Mukunda!" Mother had said. "The hour is here when I must relate a number of phenomenal events following your birth. I first knew your destined path when you were but a babe in my arms. I carried you then to the home of my guru in Banaras. Almost hidden behind a throng of disciples, I could barely see Lahiri Mahasaya as he sat in deep meditation.

"While I patted you, I was praying that the great guru take notice and bestow a blessing. As my silent devotional demand grew

in intensity, he opened his eyes and beckoned me to approach. The others made a way for me; I bowed at the sacred feet. Lahiri Mahasaya seated you on his lap, placing his hand on your forehead by way of spiritually baptizing you.

"Little mother, thy son will be a yogi. As a spiritual engine, he will carry many souls to God's kingdom."

"My heart leaped with joy to find my secret prayer granted by the omniscient guru. Shortly before your birth, he had told me you would follow his path.

"Later, my son, your vision of the Great Light was known to me and your sister Roma, as from the next room we observed you motionless on the bed. Your little face was illuminated; your voice rang with iron resolve as you spoke of going to the Himalayas in quest of the Divine.

"In these ways, dear son, I came to know that your road lies far from worldly ambitions. The most singular event in my life brought further confirmation — an event which now impels my deathbed message.

"It was an interview with a sage in the Punjab. While our family was living in Lahore, one morning the servant came into my room. 'Mistress, a strange sadhu* is here. He insists that he "see the mother of Mukunda."'

"These simple words struck a profound chord within me; I went at once to greet the visitor. Bowing at his feet, I sensed that before me was a true man of God.

"Mother,' he said, 'the great masters wish you to know that your stay on earth shall not be long. Your next illness shall prove to be your last.'† There was a silence, during which I felt no alarm but only a vibration of great peace. Finally he addressed me again:

"You are to be the custodian of a certain silver amulet. I will not give it to you today; to demonstrate the truth in my words, the

* An anchorite; one who pursues a *sādhana* or path of spiritual discipline.

† When I discovered by these words that Mother had possessed secret knowledge of a short life, I understood for the first time why she had been insistent on hastening the plans for Ananta's marriage. Though she died before the wedding, her natural maternal wish had been to witness the rites.

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talisman shall materialize in your hands tomorrow as you meditate. On your deathbed, you must instruct your eldest son Ananta to keep the amulet for one year and then to hand it over to your second son. Mukunda will understand the meaning of the talisman from the great ones. He should receive it about the time he is ready to renounce all worldly hopes and to start his vital search for God. When he has retained the amulet for some years, and when it has served its purpose, it shall vanish. Even if kept in the most secret spot, it shall return whence it came.'

"I proffered alms* to the saint, and bowed before him in great reverence. Not taking the offering, he departed with a blessing. The next evening, as I sat with folded hands in meditation, a silver amulet materialized between my palms, even as the sadhu had promised. It made itself known by a cold, smooth touch. I have jealously guarded it for more than two years, and now leave it in Ananta's keeping. Do not grieve for me, as I shall have been ushered by my great guru into the arms of the Infinite. Farewell, my child; the Cosmic Mother will protect you."

A blaze of illumination came over me with possession of the amulet; many dormant memories awakened. The talisman, round and anciently quaint, was covered with Sanskrit characters. I understood that it came from teachers of past lives, who were invisibly guiding my steps. A further significance there was, indeed; but one may not fully unveil the heart of an amulet.†

How the talisman finally vanished amidst deeply unhappy circumstances of my life, and how its loss was a herald of my gain of a guru, may not be told in this chapter.

* A customary gesture of respect to sadhus.

† The amulet was an astrally produced object. Structurally evanescent, such objects must finally disappear from our earth. (See chapter 43.)

A *mantra* or sacred chant words were inscribed on the talisman. The potencies of sound and of *vach*, the human voice, have nowhere else been so profoundly investigated as in India. The *Aum* vibration that reverberates throughout the universe (the "Word" or "voice of many waters" of the Bible) has three manifestations or *gunas*, those of creation, preservation, and destruction (*Taittiriya Upanishad* I:8). Each time a man utters a word he puts into operation one of the three qualities of *Aum*. This is the lawful reason behind the injunction of all scriptures that man should speak the truth.

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But the small boy, thwarted in his attempts to reach the Himalayas, daily travelled far on the wings of his amulet.

The Sanskrit *mantra* on the amulet possessed, when correctly pronounced, a spiritually beneficial vibratory potency. The Sanskrit alphabet, ideally constructed, consists of fifty letters, each one carrying a fixed invariable pronunciation. George Bernard Shaw wrote a wise, and of course witty, essay on the phonetic inadequacy of the Latin-based English alphabet, in which twenty-six letters struggle unsuccessfully to bear the burden of sound. With his customary ruthlessness ("If the introduction of an English alphabet for the English language costs a civil war... I shall not grudge it"), Mr. Shaw urges the adoption of a new alphabet with forty-two characters (see his preface to Wilson's *The Miraculous Birth of Language*, Philosophical Library, New York). Such an alphabet would approximate the phonetic perfection of the Sanskrit, whose use of fifty letters prevents mispronunciations.

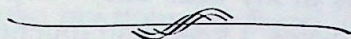
The discovery of seals in the Indus Valley is leading a number of scholars to abandon the current theory that India "borrowed" her Sanskrit alphabet from Semitic sources. A few great Hindu cities have been recently unearthed at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, affording proof of an eminent culture that "must have had a long antecedent history on the soil of India, taking us back to an age that can only be dimly surmised" (Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization*, 1931).

If the Hindu theory of the extremely great antiquity of civilized man on this planet be correct, it becomes possible to explain why the world's most *ancient* tongue, Sanskrit, is also the most *perfect*. (See p. 84 n.) "The Sanskrit language," said Sir William Jones, founder of the Asiatic Society, "whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either."

"Since the revival of classical learning," the *Encyclopedia Americana* states, "there has been no other event in the history of culture as important as the discovery of Sanskrit [by Western scholars] in the latter part of the 18th century. Linguistic science, comparative grammar, comparative mythology, the science of religion... either owe their very existence to the discovery of Sanskrit or were profoundly influenced by its study."

CHAPTER 3

The Saint With Two Bodies



"Father, if I promise to return home without coercion, may I take a sight-seeing trip to Banaras?"

My keen love of travel was seldom hindered by Father. He permitted me, even as a mere boy, to visit many cities and pilgrimage spots. Usually one or more of my friends accompanied me; we would travel comfortably on first-class passes provided by Father. His position as a railway official was fully satisfactory to the nomads in the family.

Father promised to give my request due consideration. The next day he summoned me and held out a round-trip pass from Bareilly to Banaras, a number of rupee notes, and two letters.

"I have a business matter to propose to a Banaras friend, Kedar Nath Babu. Unfortunately I have lost his address. But I believe you will be able to get this letter to him through our common friend, Swami Pranabananda. The swami, my brother disciple, has attained an exalted spiritual stature. You will benefit by his company; this second note will serve as your introduction."

Father's eyes twinkled as he added, "Mind, no more flights from home!"

I set forth with the zest of my twelve years (though time has never dimmed my delight in new scenes and strange faces). Reaching Banaras, I proceeded immediately to the swami's residence. The front door was open; I made my way to a long, hall-like

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room on the second floor. A rather stout man, wearing only a loin-cloth, was seated in lotus posture on a slightly raised platform. His head and unwrinkled face were clean-shaven; a beatific smile played about his lips. To dispel my thought that I had intruded, he greeted me as an old friend.

"*Baba anand* (bliss to my dear one)." His welcome was given heartily in a childlike voice. I knelt and touched his feet.

"Are you Swami Pranabananda?"

He nodded. "Are you Bhagabati's son?" His words were out before I had had time to get Father's letter from my pocket. In astonishment, I handed him the note of introduction, which now seemed superfluous.

"Of course I will locate Kedar Nath Babu for you." The saint again surprised me by his clairvoyance. He glanced at the letter, and made a few affectionate references to my parent.

"You know, I am enjoying two pensions. One is by the recommendation of your father, for whom I once worked in the railway office. The other is by the recommendation of my Heavenly Father, for whom I have conscientiously finished my earthly duties in life."

I found this remark very obscure. "What kind of pension, sir, do you receive from the Heavenly Father? Does He drop money in your lap?"

He laughed. "I mean a pension of fathomless peace — a reward for many years of deep meditation. I never crave money now. My few material needs are amply provided for. Later you will understand the significance of a second pension."

Abruptly terminating our conversation, the saint became gravely motionless. A sphinxlike air enveloped him. At first his eyes sparkled, as if observing something of interest, then grew dull. I felt abashed at his pauciloquy; he had not yet told me how I might meet Father's friend. A trifle restlessly, I looked about me in the bare room, empty except for us two. My idle gaze took in his wooden sandals, lying under the platform seat.

"Little sir,* don't get worried. The man you wish to see will be

* *Choto Mahasaya* is the term by which a number of Indian saints addressed me. It means "little sir."

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with you in half an hour." The yogi was reading my mind—a feat not too difficult at the moment!

Again he fell into inscrutable silence. When my watch informed me that thirty minutes had elapsed, the swami aroused himself.

"I think Kedar Nath Babu is nearing the door," he said.

I heard somebody coming up the stairs. An amazed incomprehension arose suddenly; my thoughts raced in confusion: "How is it possible that Father's friend has been summoned to this place without the help of a messenger? The swami has spoken to no one but me since my arrival!"

I unceremoniously quitted the room and descended the steps. Halfway down I met a thin, fair-skinned man of medium height. He appeared to be in a hurry.

"Are you Kedar Nath Babu?" Excitement coloured my voice.

"Yes. Are you not Bhagabati's son who has been waiting here to meet me?" He smiled in friendly fashion.

"Sir, how do you happen to come here?" I felt baffled resentment over his inexplicable presence.

"Everything is mysterious today! Less than an hour ago I had just finished my bath in the Ganges when Swami Pranabananda approached me. I have no idea how he knew I was there at that time.

"Bhagabati's son is waiting for you in my apartment," he said. 'Will you come with me?' I gladly agreed. As we proceeded hand in hand, the swami in his wooden sandals was strangely able to outpace me, though I wore these stout walking shoes.

"How long will it take you to reach my place?" Pranabanandaji suddenly halted to ask me this question.

"About half an hour."

"I have something else to do at present." He gave me an enigmatical glance. 'I must leave you behind. You can join me in my house, where Bhagabati's son and I will be awaiting you.'

"Before I could remonstrate, he dashed swiftly past me and disappeared in the crowd. I walked here as fast as possible."

This explanation only increased my bewilderment. I inquired how long he had known the swami.

"We met a few times last year, but not recently. I was very glad to see him again today at the bathing *ghat*."

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"I cannot believe my ears! Am I losing my mind? Did you meet him in a vision, or did you actually see him, touch his hand, and hear the sound of his feet?"

"I don't know what you're driving at!" He flushed angrily. "I am not lying to you. Can't you understand that only through the swami could I have known you were waiting at this place for me?"

"Why, that man, Swami Pranabananda, has not left my sight a moment since I first came about an hour ago." I blurted out the whole story, and repeated the conversations the swami and I had had.

His eyes opened wide. "Are we living in this material age, or are we dreaming? I never expected to witness such a miracle in my life! I thought this swami was just an ordinary man, and now I find he can materialize an extra body and work through it!" Together we entered the saint's room. Kedar Nath Babu pointed to the shoes under the platform seat.

"Look, those are the very sandals he was wearing at the *ghat*," he whispered. "He was clad only in a loincloth, just as I see him now."

As the visitor bowed before him, the saint turned to me with a quizzical smile.

"Why are you stupefied at all this? The subtle unity of the phenomenal world is not hidden from true yogis. I instantly see and converse with my disciples in distant Calcutta. They can similarly transcend at will every obstacle of gross matter."

It was probably in an effort to stir spiritual ardour in my young breast that the swami had condescended to tell me of his powers of astral radio and television.* But instead of enthusiasm, I experi-

* In its own way, physical science is affirming the validity of laws discovered by yogis through mental science. For example, a demonstration that man has televisual powers was given on Nov. 26, 1934, at the Royal University of Rome. "Dr. Giuseppe Calligaris, professor of neuro-psychology, pressed certain parts of a subject's body and the subject responded with minute descriptions of persons and objects on the opposite side of a wall. Dr. Calligaris told the professors that if certain areas on the skin are agitated, the subject is given super-sensorial impressions enabling him to see objects that he could not otherwise perceive. To enable his subject to discern things on the other side of a wall, Professor Calligaris pressed a spot to the right of the thorax for fifteen minutes. Dr. Calligaris said that when certain spots of the body are agitated, the subjects can see objects at any distance, regardless of whether they have ever before seen those objects."

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enced only an awestricken fear. Inasmuch as I was destined to undertake my divine search through one particular guru — Sri Yukteswar, whom I had not yet met — I felt no inclination to accept Pranabananda as my teacher. I glanced at him doubtfully, wondering if it were he or his counterpart before me.

The master sought to banish my disquietude by bestowing a soul-awakening gaze, and by some inspiring words about his guru.

“Lahiri Mahasaya was the greatest yogi I ever knew. He was Divinity Itself in the form of flesh.”

If a disciple, I reflected, could materialize an extra fleshly form at will, what miracles indeed could be barred to his master?

“I will tell you how priceless is a guru’s help. I used to meditate with another disciple for eight hours every night. We had to work at the railway office during the day. Finding difficulty in carrying on my clerical duties, I desired to devote my whole time to God. For eight years I persevered, meditating half the night. I had wonderful results; tremendous spiritual perceptions illumined my mind. But a little veil always remained between me and the Infinite. Even with superhuman earnestness, I found the final irrevocable union to be denied me. One evening I paid a visit to Lahiri Mahasaya and pleaded for his divine intercession. My importunities continued during the entire night.

“‘Angelic Guru, my spiritual anguish is such that I can no longer bear my life without meeting the Great Beloved face to face!’

“‘What can I do? You must meditate more profoundly.’

“‘I am appealing to Thee, O God my Master! I see Thee materialized before me in a physical body; bless me that I may perceive Thee in Thine infinite form!’

“Lahiri Mahasaya extended his hand in a benign gesture. ‘You may go now and meditate. I have interceded for you with Brahma.’* ”

“Immeasurably uplifted, I returned to my home. In meditation that night, the burning Goal of my life was achieved. Now I ceaselessly enjoy the spiritual pension. Never from that day has the

* God in His aspect of Creator; from Sanskrit root *bribh*, to expand.

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Blissful Creator remained hidden from my eyes behind any screen of delusion."

Pranabananda's face was suffused with divine light. The peace of another world entered my heart; all fear had fled. The saint made a further confidence.

"Some months later I returned to Lahiri Mahasaya and tried to thank him for his bestowal of the infinite gift. Then I mentioned another matter.

"Divine Guru, I can no longer work in the office. Please release me. Brahma keeps me continuously intoxicated.'

"Apply for a pension from your company.'

"What reason shall I give, so early in my service?'

"Say what you feel.'

"The next day I made my application. The doctor inquired the grounds for my premature request.

"At work, I find an overpowering sensation rising in my spine. It permeates my whole body, unfitting me for the performance of my duties.'*

"Without further questioning the physician recommended me highly for a pension, which I soon received. I know the divine will of Lahiri Mahasaya worked through the doctor and the railway officials, including your father. Automatically they obeyed the great guru's spiritual direction, and freed me for a life of unbroken communion with the Beloved."

After this extraordinary revelation, Swami Pranabananda

* In deep meditation, the first experience of Spirit is on the altar of the spine, and then in the brain. The torrential bliss is overwhelming, but the yogi learns to control its outward manifestations.

At the time of our meeting, Pranabananda was, indeed, a fully illumined master. But the closing days in his business life had occurred many years earlier; he had not then become irrevocably established in *nirbikalpa samadhi* (see pp. 238, 401 n.). In that perfect and unshakable state of consciousness, a yogi finds no difficulty in performing any of his worldly duties.

After his retirement, Pranabananda wrote *Pranab Gita*, a profound commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, available in Hindi and Bengali.

The power of appearing in more than one body is a *siddhi* (yogic power) mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (see p. 227 n.). The phenomenon of bilocation has been exhibited in the lives of many saints down the ages.

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retired into one of his long silences. As I was taking leave, touching his feet reverently, he gave me his blessing:

"Your life belongs to the path of renunciation and yoga. I shall see you again, with your father, later on." The years brought fulfillment to both these predictions.*

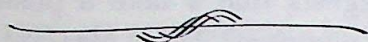
Kedar Nath Babu walked by my side in the gathering darkness. I delivered Father's letter, which my companion read under a street lamp.

"Your father suggests that I take a position in the Calcutta office of his railway company. How pleasant to look forward to one, at least, of the pensions that Swami Pranabananda enjoys! But it is impossible; I cannot leave Banaras. Alas, two bodies are not yet for me!"

* See chapter 27.

CHAPTER 4

My Interrupted Flight Toward the Himalayas



"Leave your classroom on some trifling pretext, and engage a hackney carriage. Stop in the lane where no one in my house can see you."

These were my final instructions to Amar Mitter, a high school friend who planned to accompany me to the Himalayas. We had chosen the following day for our flight. Precautions were necessary, as my brother Ananta exercised a vigilant eye. He was determined to foil the plans of escape that he suspected were uppermost in my mind. The amulet, like a spiritual yeast, was silently at work within me. I hoped to find, amid the Himalayan snows, the master whose face often appeared to me in visions.

The family was living now in Calcutta, where Father had been permanently transferred. Following the patriarchal Indian custom, Ananta had brought his bride to live in our home. There in a small attic room I engaged in daily meditations and prepared my mind for the divine search.

The memorable morning arrived with inauspicious rain. Hearing the wheels of Amar's carriage in the road, I hastily tied together a blanket, a pair of sandals, two loincloths, a string of prayer beads, Lahiri Mahasaya's picture, and a copy of the

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Bhagavad Gita. This bundle I threw from my third-storey window. I ran down the steps and passed my uncle, buying fish at the door.

"What is the excitement?" His gaze roved suspiciously over my person.

I gave him a noncommittal smile and walked to the lane. Retrieving my bundle, I joined Amar with conspiratorial caution. We drove to Chandni Chauk, a merchandise centre. For months we had been saving our tiffin money to buy English clothes. Knowing that my clever brother could easily play the part of a detective, we thought to outwit him by wearing European garb.

On the way to the station, we stopped for my cousin, Jotin Ghosh, whom I called Jatinda. He was a new convert, longing for a guru in the Himalayas. He donned the new suit we had in readiness. Well camouflaged, we hoped! A deep elation possessed our hearts.

"All we need now are canvas shoes." I led my companions to a shop displaying rubber-soled footwear. "Articles of leather, got only through the slaughter of animals, should be absent on this holy trip." I halted on the street to remove the leather cover from my Bhagavad Gita, and the leather straps from my English-made *sola topee* (helmet).

At the station we bought tickets to Burdwan, where we planned to transfer for Hardwar in the Himalayan foothills. As soon as the train, like ourselves, was in flight, I gave utterance to a few of my glorious anticipations.

"Just imagine!" I ejaculated. "We shall be initiated by the masters and experience the trance of cosmic consciousness. Our flesh will be charged with such magnetism that wild animals of the Himalayas will come tamely near us. Tigers will be no more than meek house cats awaiting our caresses!"

This remark — picturing a prospect I considered entrancing, both metaphorically and literally — brought an enthusiastic smile from Amar. But Jatinda averted his gaze, directing it through the window at the scampering landscape.

"Let the money be divided in three portions." Jatinda broke a long silence with this suggestion. "Each of us should buy his own ticket at Burdwan. Thus no one at the station will surmise that we are running away together."

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I unsuspectingly agreed. At dusk our train stopped at Burdwan. Jatinda entered the ticket office; Amar and I sat on the platform. We waited fifteen minutes, then made unavailing inquiries. Searching in all directions, we shouted Jatinda's name with the urgency of fright. But he had faded into the dark unknown surrounding the little station.

I was completely unnerved, shocked to a peculiar numbness. That God would countenance this depressing episode! The romantic occasion of my first carefully planned flight after Him was cruelly marred.

"Amar, we must return home." I was weeping like a child. "Jatinda's callous departure is an ill omen. This trip is doomed to failure."

"Is this your love for the Lord? Can't you stand the little test of a treacherous companion?"

Through Amar's suggestion of a divine test, my heart steadied itself. We refreshed ourselves with famous Burdwan sweetmeats, *sitabhog* (food for the goddess) and *motichur* (nuggets of sweet pearl). In a few hours we entrained for Hardwar, via Bareilly. Changing trains the following day at Moghul Serai, we discussed a vital matter as we waited on the platform.

"Amar, we may soon be closely questioned by railway officials. I am not underrating my brother's ingenuity! No matter what the outcome, I will not speak untruth."

"All I ask of you, Mukunda, is to keep still. Don't laugh or grin while I am talking."

At this moment a European station-agent accosted me. He waved a telegram whose import I immediately grasped.

"Are you running away from home in anger?"

"No!" I was glad his choice of words permitted me to make emphatic reply. Not anger but "divinest melancholy" was responsible, I knew, for my unconventional behaviour.

The official then turned to Amar. The duel of wits that followed hardly permitted me to maintain the counselled stoic gravity.

"Where is the third boy?" The man injected a full ring of authority into his voice. "Come now — speak the truth!"

"Sir, I notice you are wearing eyeglasses. Can't you see that we

are only two?" Amar smiled impudently. "I am not a magician; I can't conjure up a third boy."

The official, noticeably disconcerted by this impertinence, sought a new field of attack. "What is your name?"

"I am called Thomas. I am the son of an English mother and a converted Christian Indian father."

"What is your friend's name?"

"I call him Thompson."

By this time my inward mirth had reached a zenith; I uncere- moniously made for the train, which was providentially whistling for departure. Amar followed with the official, who was credulous and obliging enough to put us into a European compartment. It evidently pained him to think of two half-English boys travelling in the section allotted to natives. After his polite exit, I lay back on the seat and laughed uproariously. Amar wore an expression of blithe satisfaction at having outwitted a veteran European official.

On the platform I had contrived to read the telegram. From my brother Ananta, it went thus: "Three Bengali boys in English clothes running away from home toward Hardwar via Moghul Serai. Please detain them until my arrival. Ample reward for your services."

"Amar, I told you not to leave marked timetables in your home." My glance was reproachful. "Brother must have found one there."

My friend sheepishly acknowledged the thrust. We halted briefly in Bareilly, where Dwarka Prasad* awaited us with a telegram from Ananta. Dwarka tried valiantly to detain us; I convinced him that our flight had not been undertaken lightly. As on a previous occasion, Dwarka refused my invitation to set out for the Himalayas.

While our train stood in a station that night, and I was half asleep, Amar was awakened by another questioning official. He, too, fell a victim to the hybrid charms of "Thomas" and "Thompson." The train bore us triumphantly into a dawn arrival at Hardwar. The majestic mountains loomed invitingly in the distance. We dashed through the station and entered the freedom of city crowds. Our first act was to change into native costume, as

* Mentioned on page 16.

Ananta had somehow penetrated our European disguise. A premonition of capture weighed on my mind.

Deeming it advisable to leave Hardwar at once, we bought tickets to proceed north to Rishikesh, a soil long hallowed by the feet of many masters. I had already boarded the train, while Amar lagged on the platform. He was brought to an abrupt halt by a shout from a policeman. An unwelcome guardian, the officer escorted Amar and me to a police-station bungalow and took charge of our money. He explained courteously that it was his duty to hold us until my elder brother arrived.

Learning that the truants' destination had been the Himalayas, the officer related a strange story.

"I see you are crazy about saints! You will never meet a greater man of God than the one I saw only yesterday. My brother officer and I first encountered him five days ago. We were patrolling by the Ganges, on a sharp lookout for a certain murderer. Our instructions were to capture him, alive or dead. He was known to be masquerading as a sadhu in order to rob pilgrims. A short way before us, we spied a figure which resembled the description of the criminal. He ignored our command to stop; we ran to overpower him. Approaching his back, I wielded my axe with tremendous force; the man's right arm was severed almost completely from his body.

"Without outcry or any glance at the ghastly wound, the stranger astonishingly continued his swift pace. As we jumped in front of him, he spoke quietly.

"I am not the murderer you are seeking.'

"I was deeply mortified to see I had injured the person of a divine-looking sage. Prostrating myself at his feet, I implored his pardon, and offered my turban cloth to staunch the heavy spurts of blood.

"Son, that was just an understandable mistake on your part.' The saint regarded me kindly. 'Run along, and don't reproach yourself. The Beloved Mother is taking care of me.' He pushed his dangling arm into its stump and lo! it adhered; the blood inexplicably ceased to flow.

"Come to me under yonder tree in three days and you will find me fully healed. Thus you will feel no remorse.'

"Yesterday my brother officer and I went eagerly to the desig-

My Interrupted Flight Toward the Himalayas

nated spot. The sadhu was there and allowed us to examine his arm. It bore no scar nor trace of hurt!

"I am going via Rishikesh to the Himalayan solitudes.' The sadhu blessed us as he departed quickly. I feel that my life has been uplifted through his sanctity."

The officer concluded with a pious ejaculation; his experience had obviously moved him beyond his usual depths. With an impressive gesture, he handed me a printed clipping about the miracle. In the usual garbled manner of the sensational type of newspaper (not missing, alas! even in India), the reporter's version was slightly exaggerated: it indicated that the sadhu had been almost decapitated!

Amar and I lamented that we had missed the great yogi who could forgive his persecutor in such a Christlike way. India, materially poor for the last two centuries, yet has an inexhaustible fund of divine wealth; spiritual "skyscrapers" may occasionally be encountered by the wayside, even by worldly men like this policeman.

We thanked the officer for relieving our tedium with his marvellous story. He was probably intimating that he was more fortunate than we: he had met an illumined saint without effort; our earnest search had ended, not at the feet of a master, but in a coarse police station!

So near the Himalayas and yet, in our captivity, so far, I told Amar I felt doubly impelled to seek freedom.

"Let us slip away when opportunity offers. We can go on foot to holy Rishikesh." I smiled encouragingly.

But my companion had turned pessimist as soon as the stalwart prop of our money had been taken from us.

"If we started a trek over such dangerous jungle land, we should finish, not in the city of saints, but in the stomachs of tigers!"

Ananta and Amar's brother arrived after three days. Amar greeted his relative with affectionate relief. I was unreconciled; Ananta got no more from me than a severe upbraiding.

"I understand how you feel." My brother spoke soothingly. "All I ask of you is to accompany me to Banaras to meet a certain sage, and go on to Calcutta to visit our grieving father for a few days. Then you may resume your search here for a master."

Amar entered the conversation at this point to disclaim any inten-

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tion of returning to Hardwar with me. He was enjoying the familial warmth. But I knew I would never abandon the quest for my guru.

Our party entrained for Banaras. There I had a singular and instant response to a prayer.

A clever scheme had been prearranged by Ananta. Before seeing me in Hardwar he had stopped in Banaras to ask a scriptural authority to interview me later. The pundit, and his son also, had promised Ananta that they would attempt to dissuade me from becoming a *sannyasi*.*

Ananta took me to their home. The son, a young man of ebullient manner, greeted me in the courtyard. He engaged me in a lengthy philosophic discourse. Professing to have a clairvoyant knowledge of my future, he discountenanced my idea of being a monk.

"You will meet continual misfortune, and be unable to find God, if you insist on deserting your ordinary responsibilities! You cannot work out your past karma† without worldly experiences."

Immortal words from the Bhagavad Gita‡ rose to my lips in reply: "Even he with the worst of karma who ceaselessly meditates on Me quickly loses the effects of his past bad actions. Becoming a high-souled being, he soon attains perennial peace. Know this for certain: the devotee who puts his trust in Me never perishes!"

But the forceful prognostications of the young man had slightly shaken my confidence. With all the fervour of my heart I prayed silently to God:

"Please solve my bewilderment and answer me, right here and now, if Thou dost desire me to lead the life of a renunciant or a worldly man!"

I noticed a sadhu of noble countenance standing just outside the compound of the pundit's house. Evidently he had overheard the spirited conversation between the self-styled clairvoyant and me, for the stranger called me to his side. I felt a tremendous power flowing from his calm eyes.

"Son, don't listen to that ignoramus. In response to your

* Literally, "renunciant"; from Sanskrit verb roots, "to cast aside."

† Effects of past actions, in this or a former life; from the Sanskrit verb *kri*, "to do."

‡ Chapter IX, verses 30-31.

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prayer, the Lord tells me to assure you that your sole path in this life is that of the renunciant."

With astonishment as well as gratitude, I smiled happily at this decisive message.

"Come away from that man!" The "ignoramus" was calling me from the courtyard. My saintly guide raised his hand in blessing and slowly departed.

"That sadhu is just as crazy as you are." It was the hoary-headed pundit who made this charming observation. He and his son were gazing at me lugubriously. "I have heard that he, too, has left his home in a vague search for God."

I turned away. To Ananta I remarked that I would not engage in further discussion with our hosts. My discouraged brother agreed to an immediate departure; we soon entrained for Calcutta.

"Mr. Detective, how did you discover I had fled with two companions?" I vented my lively curiosity to Ananta during our homeward journey. He smiled mischievously.

"At your school, I found that Amar had left his classroom and had not returned. I went to his home the next morning and unearthed a marked timetable. Amar's father was just leaving by carriage and was talking to the coachman.

"My son will not ride with me to his school this morning. He has disappeared!' the father moaned.

"I heard from a brother coachman that your son and two others, dressed in European suits, boarded the train at Howrah Station,' the man stated. 'They made a present of their leather shoes to the cab driver.'

"Thus I had three clues — the timetable, the trio of boys, and the English clothing."

I was listening to Ananta's disclosures with mingled mirth and vexation. Our generosity to the coachman had been slightly misplaced!

"Of course I rushed to send telegrams to station officials in all the cities that Amar had underlined in the timetable. He had checked Bareilly, so I wired your friend Dwarka there. After inquiries in our Calcutta neighborhood, I learned that cousin Jatinda had been absent one night but had arrived home the

following morning in European garb. I sought him out and invited him to dinner. He accepted, quite disarmed by my friendly manner. On the way I led him unsuspectingly to a police station. He was surrounded by several officers whom I had previously selected for their ferocious appearance. Under their formidable gaze, Jatinda agreed to account for his mysterious conduct.

"I started for the Himalayas in a buoyant spiritual mood," he explained. "Inspiration filled me at the prospect of meeting the masters. But as soon as Mukunda said, 'During our ecstasies in the Himalayan caves, tigers will be spellbound and sit around us like tame pussies,' my spirits froze; beads of perspiration formed on my brow. 'What then?' I thought. 'If the vicious nature of the tigers be not changed through the power of our spiritual trance, shall they treat us with the kindness of house cats?' In my mind's eye, I already saw myself the compulsory inmate of some tiger's stomach — entering there not at once with the whole body, but by installments of its several parts!"

My anger at Jatinda's vanishment evaporated in laughter. The hilarious explanation on the train was worth all the anguish he had caused me. I must confess to a slight feeling of satisfaction: Jatinda, too, had not escaped an encounter with the police!

"Ananta,* you are a born sleuthhound!" My glance of amusement was not without some exasperation. "And I shall tell Jatinda I am glad he was prompted by no mood of treachery, as it appeared, but only by the prudent instinct of self-preservation!"

At home in Calcutta, Father touchingly requested me to curb my roving feet until, at least, the completion of my high school studies. In my absence, he had lovingly hatched a plot by arranging for a saintly pundit, Swami Kebalananda, to come regularly to the house.

"The sage will be your Sanskrit tutor," my parent announced confidently.

Father hoped to satisfy my religious yearnings by instruction from a learned philosopher. But the tables were subtly turned: my new teacher, far from offering intellectual aridities, fanned the

* I always addressed him as Ananta-da. *Da* is a respectful suffix that brothers and sisters add to the name of their eldest brother.

embers of my God-aspiration. Unknown to Father, Swami Kebalananda was an exalted disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya. The peerless guru had possessed thousands of disciples, silently drawn to him by the irresistibility of his divine magnetism. I learned later that Lahiri Mahasaya had often characterized Kebalananda as rishi or illumined sage.*

Luxuriant curls framed my tutor's handsome face. His dark eyes were guileless, with the transparency of a child's. All the movements of his slight body were marked by a restful deliberation. Ever gentle and loving, he was firmly established in the infinite consciousness. Many of our happy hours together were spent in deep *Kriya* meditation.

Kebalananda was a noted authority on the ancient *shastras* or sacred books; his erudition had earned him the title of "Shastri Mahasaya," by which he was usually addressed. But my progress in Sanskrit scholarship was unnoteworthy. I sought every opportunity to forsake prosaic grammar and to talk of yoga and Lahiri Mahasaya. My tutor obliged me one day by telling me something of his own life with the master.

"Rarely fortunate, I was able to remain near Lahiri Mahasaya for ten years. His Banaras home was my nightly goal of pilgrimage. The guru was always present in a small front parlour on the first floor. As he sat in lotus posture on a backless wooden seat, his disciples garlanded him in a semicircle. His eyes sparkled and danced with the joy of the Divine. They were ever half closed, peering through the inner telescopic orb into a sphere of eternal bliss. He seldom spoke at length. Occasionally his gaze would focus on a student in need of help; healing words poured then like an avalanche of light.

"An indescribable peace blossomed within me at the master's glance. I was permeated with his fragrance, as though from a lotus

* At the time of our meeting, Kebalananda had not yet joined the Swami Order and was generally called "Shastri Mahasaya." To avoid confusion with the name of Lahiri Mahasaya and of Master Mahasaya (chapter 9), I am referring to my Sanskrit tutor only by his later monastic name of Swami Kebalananda. His biography has been recently published in Bengali. Born in the Khulna district of Bengal in 1863, Kebalananda gave up his body in Banaras at the age of sixty-eight. His family name was Ashutosh Chatterji.

of infinity. To be with him, even without exchanging a word for days, was experience which changed my entire being. If any invisible barrier rose in the path of my concentration, I would meditate at the guru's feet. There the most tenuous states came easily within my grasp. Such perceptions eluded me in the presence of lesser teachers. The master was a living temple of God, whose secret doors were open to all disciples through devotion.

"Lahiri Mahasaya was no bookish interpreter of the scriptures. Effortlessly he dipped into the 'divine library.' Foam of words and spray of thoughts gushed from the fountain of his omniscience. He had the wondrous clavis that unlocked the profound philosophical science hidden ages ago in the Vedas.* If asked to explain the different planes of consciousness mentioned in the ancient texts, he would smilingly assent.

"I will undergo those states, and presently tell you what I perceive.' He was thus diametrically unlike the teachers who commit scripture to memory and then give forth unrealized abstractions.

"Please expound the holy stanzas as the meaning occurs to you.' The taciturn guru often gave this instruction to a nearby disciple. 'I will guide your thoughts, that the right interpretation be uttered.' In this way many of Lahiri Mahasaya's perceptions came to be recorded, with voluminous commentaries by various students.

"The master never counselled slavish belief. 'Words are only shells,' he said. 'Win conviction of God's presence through your own joyous contact in meditation.'

"No matter what the disciple's problem, the guru advised *Kriya Yoga* for its solution.

"The yogic key will not lose its efficiency when I am no longer present in the body to guide you. This technique cannot be bound,

* Over 100 canonical books of the ancient four Vedas are extant. In his *Journal* Emerson paid this tribute to Vedic thought: "It is sublime as heat and night and a breathless ocean. It contains every religious sentiment, all the grand ethics which visit in turn each noble poetic mind.... It is of no use to put away the book; if I trust myself in the woods or in a boat upon the pond, Nature makes a *Brahmin* of me presently: eternal necessity, eternal compensation, unfathomable power, unbroken silence.... This is her creed. Peace, she saith to me, and purity and absolute abandonment these panaceas expiate all sin and bring you to the beatitude of the Eight Gods."

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filed, and forgotten, in the manner of theoretical inspirations. Continue ceaselessly on your path to liberation through *Kriya*, whose power lies in practice.'

"I myself consider *Kriya* the most effective device of salvation through self-effort ever to be evolved in man's search for the Infinite." Kealananda concluded with this earnest testimony. "Through its use, the omnipotent God, hidden in all men, became visibly incarnated in the flesh of Lahiri Mahasaya and of a number of his disciples."

A Christlike miracle by Lahiri Mahasaya took place in Kealananda's presence. My saintly tutor recounted the story one day, his eyes remote from the Sanskrit texts on the table before us.

"A blind disciple, Ramu, aroused my active pity. Should he have no light in his eyes, when he faithfully served our master, in whom the Divine was fully blazing? One morning I sought to speak to Ramu, but he sat for patient hours fanning the guru with a handmade palm-leaf *punkha*. When the devotee finally left the room, I followed him.

"Ramu, how long have you been blind?"

"From my birth, sir! Never have my eyes been blessed with a glimpse of the sun.'

"Our omnipotent guru can help you. Please make a supplication.'

"The following day Ramu diffidently approached Lahiri Mahasaya. The disciple felt almost ashamed to ask that physical wealth be added to his spiritual superabundance.

"Master, the Illuminator of the cosmos is in you. I pray you to bring His light into my eyes, that I perceive the sun's lesser glow.'

"Ramu, someone has connived to put me in a difficult position. I have no healing power.'

"Sir, the Infinite One within you can certainly heal.'

"That is indeed different, Ramu. God's limit is nowhere! He who ignites the stars and the cells of flesh with mysterious life-effulgence can surely bring the lustre of vision into your eyes.' The master touched Ramu's forehead at the point between the eyebrows.*

* The seat of the "single" or spiritual eye. At death the consciousness of man is usually drawn to this holy spot, accounting for the upraised eyes found in the dead.

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"Keep your mind concentrated there, and frequently chant the name of the prophet Rama for seven days. The splendour of the sun shall have a special dawn for you.'

"Lo! in one week it was so. For the first time, Ramu beheld the fair face of nature. The Omniscient One had unerringly directed his disciple to repeat the name of Rama, adored by him above all other saints. Ramu's faith was the devotionally ploughed soil in which the guru's powerful seed of permanent healing sprouted." Kebalananda was silent for a moment, then paid a further tribute to his guru.

"It was evident in all miracles performed by Lahiri Mahasaya that he never allowed the ego-principle* to consider itself a causative force. By the perfection of his surrender to the Prime Healing Power, the master enabled It to flow freely through him.

"The numerous bodies that were spectacularly healed through Lahiri Mahasaya eventually had to feed the flames of cremation. But the silent spiritual awakenings he effected, the Christlike disciples he fashioned, are his imperishable miracles."

I never became a Sanskrit scholar; Kebalananda taught me a diviner syntax.

* The ego-principle, *ahamkara* (lit., "I do") is the root cause of dualism or the seeming separation between man and his Creator. *Ahamkara* brings human beings under the sway of *maya* (cosmic delusion), by which the subject (ego) falsely appears as object; the creatures imagine themselves to be creators. (See pp. 42 n., 265-66, 274 n.)

"Naught of myself I do!"

Thus will he think, who holds the truth of truths...

Always assured: "This is the sense-world plays
With senses." (V:8-9)

Seeing, he sees, indeed, who sees that works
Are Nature's wont, for Soul to practice by;
Acting, yet not the agent. (XIII:29)

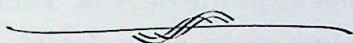
Albeit I be
Unborn, undying, indestructible,
The Lord of all things living; not the less —
By Maya, by My magic which I stamp
On floating Nature-forms, the primal vast —
I come, and go, and come. (IV:6)

Hard it is
To pierce that veil divine of various shows
Which hideth Me; yet they who worship Me
Pierce it and pass beyond. (VII:14)

—Bhagavad Gita (Arnold's translation)

A "Perfume Saint"

Displays His Wonders



"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."*

I did not have this wisdom of Solomon† to comfort me; I gazed searchingly about me, on any excursion from home, for the face of my destined guru. But my path did not cross his until after the completion of my high school studies.

Two years elapsed between my flight with Amar toward the Himalayas, and the great day of Sri Yukteswar's arrival into my life. During that interim I met a number of sages — the "Perfume Saint," the "Tiger Swami," Nagendra Nath Bhaduri, Master Mahasaya, and the famous Bengali scientist Jagadis Chandra Bose.

My encounter with the "Perfume Saint" had two preambles, one harmonious and the other humorous.

"God is simple. Everything else is complex. Do not seek absolute values in the relative world of nature."

These philosophical finalities gently entered my ear as I stood

* *Ecclesiastes* 3:1, (Bible, King James version).

† A brave king of Israel in the tenth century B. C. He ruled with such wisdom and justice that even today his name is a synonym for a wise man.

A "Perfume Saint" Displays His Wonders

originality." I was enjoying the discussion.

"Man can understand no eternal verity until he has freed himself from pretensions. The human mind, bared to a centuried slime, is teeming with the repulsive life of countless world-delusions. Struggles of the battlefield pale into insignificance here, when man first contends with inner enemies! No mortal foes these, to be overcome by a harrowing array of might! Omnipresent, unresting, pursuing man even in sleep, subtly equipped with miasmatic weapons, these soldiers of ignorant lusts seek to slay us all. Thoughtless is the man who buries his ideals, surrendering to the common fate. May he seem other than impotent, wooden, ignominious?"

"Respected sir, have you no sympathy for the bewildered masses?"

The sage was silent for a moment, then answered obliquely.

"To love both the invisible God, Repository of All Virtues, and visible man, apparently possessed of none, is often baffling! But ingenuity is equal to the maze. Inner research soon exposes a unity of all human minds — the stalwart kinship of selfish motive. In one sense at least, the brotherhood of man stands revealed. An aghast humility follows this levelling discovery. It ripens into compassion for one's fellows, blind to the healing potencies of the soul awaiting exploration."

"The saints of every age, sir, have felt like yourself for the sorrows of the world."

"Only the shallow man loses responsiveness to the woes of others' lives, as he sinks into narrow suffering of his own." The sadhu's austere face was noticeably softened. "The one who practises a scalpel self-dissection will know an expansion of universal pity. Release is given him from the deafening demands of his ego. The love of God flowers on such soil. The creature finally turns to his Creator, if for no other reason than to ask in anguish: 'Why, Lord, why?' By ignoble whips of pain, man is driven at last into the Infinite Presence, whose beauty alone should lure him."

The sage and I were present in the Calcutta Kalighat Temple, whither I had gone to view its famed magnificence. With a sweeping gesture, my chance companion dismissed the ornate dignity.

"Bricks and mortar sing us no audible tune; the heart opens only to the human chant of being."

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silently before a temple image of Kali.* Turning, I confronted a tall man whose garb, or lack of it, revealed him a wandering sadhu.

"You have indeed penetrated the bewilderment of my thoughts!" I smiled gratefully. "The confusion of benign and terrible aspects in nature, as symbolized by Kali, has puzzled wiser heads than mine!"

"Few there be who solve her mystery! Good and evil is the challenging riddle which life places sphinxlike† before every intelligence. Attempting no solution, most men pay forfeit with their lives, penalty now even as in the days of Thebes. Here and there, a towering lonely figure never cries defeat. From the *maya*‡ of duality he plucks the cleaveless truth of unity."

"You speak with conviction, sir."

"I have long exercised an honest introspection, the exquisitely painful approach to wisdom. Self-scrutiny, relentless observance of one's thoughts, is a stark and shattering experience. It pulverizes the stoutest ego. But true self-analysis mathematically operates to produce seers. The way of 'self-expression,' individual acknowledgments, results in egotists, sure of the right to their private interpretations of God and the universe."

"Truth humbly retires, no doubt, before such arrogant

* Kali represents the Eternal Principle in nature. She is traditionally pictured as a four-armed woman, standing on the recumbent form of the God Shiva or the Infinite; because the activities of nature or the phenomenal world spring from the latent Spirit. The four arms symbolize cardinal attributes: two beneficent, two destructive; the essential duality of matter or creation.

† A fabulous monster of Greek mythology, the sphinx was commonly represented with the head of a woman, the body of a lion or dog, and wings. This creature proposed a riddle to all passers-by near the ancient Grecian city of Thebes, and devoured those unable to give the answer.

‡ Cosmic illusion; literally, "the measurer." *Maya* is the magical power in creation by which limitations and divisions are apparently present in the Immeasurable and Inseparable.

Emerson wrote the following poem about *Maya* (which he spelled *Maia*):

Illusion works impenetrable,
Weaving webs innumerable;
Her gay pictures never fail,
Crowd each other, veil on veil;
Charmer who will be believed
By man who thirsts to be deceived.

A "Perfume Saint" Displays His Wonders

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We strolled to the inviting sunshine at the entrance, where throngs of devotees were passing to and fro.

"You are young." The sage surveyed me thoughtfully. "India too is young. The ancient rishis* laid down ineradicable patterns of spiritual living. Their hoary dictums suffice for this day and land. Not outmoded, not unsophisticated against the guiles of materialism, the disciplinary precepts mould India still. By millenniums — more than embarrassed scholars care to compute! — the sceptic Time has validated Vedic worth. Take it for your heritage."

As I was reverently bidding farewell to the eloquent sadhu, he revealed a clairvoyant perception:

"After you leave here today, an unusual experience will come your way."

I quitted the temple precincts and wandered along aimlessly. Turning a corner, I ran into an old acquaintance — one of those fellows whose conversational powers ignore time and embrace eternity.

"I shall let you go in a very short while," he promised, "if you will tell me all that has happened during the years of our separation."

"What a paradox! I must leave you now."

But he held me by the hand, forcing out tidbits of information. He was like a ravenous wolf, I thought in amusement; the longer I spoke, the more hungrily he sniffed for news. Inwardly I petitioned the Goddess Kali to devise a graceful means of escape.

My companion left me abruptly. I sighed with relief and doubled my pace, dreading any relapse into the garrulous fever. Hearing rapid footsteps behind me, I quickened my speed. I dared not look back. But with a bound, the youth rejoined me, jovially clasping my shoulder.

"I forgot to tell you of Gandha Baba ('Perfume Saint'), who is gracing yonder house." He pointed to a dwelling a few yards distant. "Do meet him; he is interesting. You may have an unusual experience. Good-bye," and he actually left me.

The similarly worded prediction of the sadhu at Kalighat Temple flashed to my mind. Intrigued, I entered the house and

* The rishis, literally "seers," were the authors of the Vedas in an indeterminable antiquity.

A "Perfume Saint" Displays His Wonders

was ushered into a commodious parlour. A crowd of people were sitting, Orientwise, here and there on a thick orange-coloured carpet. An awed whisper reached my ear:

"Behold Gandha Baba on the leopard skin. He can give the natural perfume of any flower to a scentless one, or revive a wilted blossom, or make a person's skin exude delightful fragrance."

I looked directly at the saint; his quick gaze rested on mine. He was plump and bearded, with dark skin and large, gleaming eyes.

"Son, I am glad to see you. Say what you want. Would you like some perfume?"

"What for?" I thought his remark rather childish.

"To experience the miraculous way of enjoying perfumes."

"Harnessing God to make odours?"

"What of it? God makes perfume anyway."

"Yes, but He fashions frail bottles of petals for fresh use and discard. Can you materialize flowers?"

"Yes. But usually I produce perfumes, little friend."

"Then scent factories will go out of business."

"I will permit them to keep their trade! My own purpose is to demonstrate the power of God."

"Sir, is it necessary to prove God? Isn't He performing miracles in everything, everywhere?"

"Yes, but we too should manifest some of His infinite creative variety."

"How long did it take to master your art?"

"Twelve years."

"For manufacturing scents by astral means! It seems, my honoured saint, you have been wasting a dozen years for fragrances which you can obtain with a few rupees from a florist's shop."

"Perfumes fade with flowers."

"Perfumes fade with death. Why should I desire that which pleases the body only?"

"Mr. Philosopher, you please my mind. Now, stretch forth your right hand." He made a gesture of blessing.

I was a few feet away from Gandha Baba; no one else was near enough to contact my body. I extended my hand, which the yogi did not touch.

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"What perfume do you want?"

"Rose."

"Be it so."

To my great surprise, the charming fragrance of rose was wafted strongly from the centre of my palm. I smilingly took a large white scentless flower from a nearby vase.

"Can this odourless blossom be permeated with jasmine?"

"Be it so."

A jasmine fragrance instantly shot from the petals. I thanked the wonder-worker and seated myself by one of his students. He informed me that Gandha Baba, whose proper name was Swami Vishuddhananda, had learned many astonishing yoga secrets from a master in Tibet. The Tibetan yogi, I was assured, had attained the age of over a thousand years.

"His disciple Gandha Baba does not always perform his perfume feats in the simple verbal manner you have just witnessed." The student spoke with obvious pride in his master. "His procedure differs widely, to accord with diversity in temperaments. He is marvellous! Many members of the Calcutta intelligentsia are among his followers."

I inwardly resolved not to add myself to their number. A guru too literally "marvellous" was not to my liking. With polite thanks to Gandha Baba, I departed. Sauntering home, I reflected on the three varied encounters the day had brought forth.

My sister Uma met me as I entered the door.

"You are getting quite stylish, using perfumes!"

Without a word, I motioned her to smell my hand.

"What an attractive rose fragrance! It is unusually strong!"

Thinking it was "strongly unusual," I silently placed the astrally scented blossom under her nostrils.

"Oh, I love jasmine!" She seized the flower. A ludicrous bafflement passed over her face as she repeatedly sniffed the odour of jasmine from a type of flower she well knew to be scentless. Her reactions disarmed my suspicion that Gandha Baba might have induced in me an autosuggestive state whereby I alone could detect the fragrances.

Later I heard from a friend, Alakananda, that the "Perfume Saint" had a power which I wish were possessed by the starving

A "Perfume Saint" Displays His Wonders

millions of the world.

"I was present with a hundred other guests at Gandha Baba's home in Burdwan," Alakananda told me. "It was a gala occasion. Because the yogi was reputed to have the power of extracting objects out of thin air, I laughingly requested him to materialize some out-of-season tangerines. Immediately the *luchis* that had been served on all the banana-leaf plates became puffed up. Each of the bread-envelopes proved to contain a peeled tangerine. I bit into my own with some trepidation, but found it delicious."

Years later I understood by inner realization how Gandha Baba accomplished his materializations. The method, alas, is beyond the reach of the world's hungry hordes.

The different sensory stimuli to which man reacts — tactual, visual, gustatory, auditory, and olfactory — are produced by vibratory variations in electrons and protons. The vibrations in turn are regulated by *prana*, "lifetrans," subtle life forces or finer-than-atomic energies intelligently charged with the five distinctive sensory idea-substances.

Gandha Baba, attuning himself with the pranic force by certain yoga practices, was able to guide the lifetrans to rearrange their vibratory structure and to objectify the desired result. His perfume, fruit, and other miracles were actual materializations of mundane vibrations, and were not inner sensations hypnotically produced.

Hypnotism has been used by physicians in minor operations as a sort of psychical chloroform for persons who might be endangered by an anaesthetic. But a hypnotic state is harmful to those often subjected to it; a negative psychological effect ensues that in time deranges the brain cells. Hypnotism is trespass into the territory of another's consciousness.* Its temporary phenomena have

* Studies in consciousness by Western psychologists are largely confined to investigations of the subconscious mind and of mental diseases that are treated through psychiatry and psychoanalysis. There is little research into the origin and fundamental formation of normal mental states and their emotional and volitional expressions — a truly basic subject not neglected in Indian philosophy. Precise classifications are made, in the *Sankhya* and *Yoga* systems, of the various links in normal mental modifications and of the characteristic functions of *buddhi* (discriminative intellect), *ahamkara* (egoistic principle), and *manas* (mind or sense-consciousness).

nothing in common with the miracles performed by men of divine realization. Awake in God, true saints effect changes in this dream-world by means of a will harmoniously attuned to the Creative Cosmic Dreamer.*

Wonder-workings such as those shown by the "Perfume Saint" are spectacular but spiritually useless. Having little purpose beyond entertainment, they are digressions from a serious search for God.

Ostentatious display of unusual powers is decried by masters. The Persian mystic, Abu Said, once laughed at certain *fakirs* (Moslem ascetics) who were proud of their miraculous powers over water, air, and space.

"A frog is also at home in the water!" Abu Said pointed out in gentle scorn. "The crow and the vulture easily fly in the air; the Devil is simultaneously present in the East and in the West! A true man is he who dwells in righteousness among his fellowmen, who may buy and sell, yet is never for a single instant forgetful of God!"† On another occasion the great Persian teacher gave his views on the religious life thus: "To lay aside what you have in your head (selfish desires and ambitions); to bestow freely what you have in your hand; and never to flinch from the blows of adversity!"

Neither the impartial sage at Kalighat Temple nor the Tibetan-trained yogi had satisfied my yearning for a guru. My heart needed no tutor for its recognitions, and cried a spontaneous "Bravo!" the more resoundingly because it was unoften summoned from silence. When I finally met my master, by sublimity of example alone he taught me the measure of a true man.

* "The universe is represented in every one of its particles. Everything is made of one hidden stuff. The world globes itself in a drop of dew... The true doctrine of omnipresence is that God appears with all His parts in every moss and cobweb."

— Emerson, in "Compensation."

† "To buy and sell, yet never to forget God!" The ideal is that hand and heart work harmoniously together. Certain Western writers claim that the Hindu goal is one of timid "escape," of inactivity and antisocial withdrawal. The fourfold Vedic plan for man's life, however, is a well-balanced one for the masses, allotting half the span to study and householder duties; the second half to contemplation and meditational practices. (See p. 246 n.)

A "Perfume Saint" Displays His Wonders

Solitude is necessary to become established in the Self, but masters then return to the world to serve it. Even saints who engage in no outward work bestow, through their thoughts and holy vibrations, more precious benefits on the world than can be given by the most strenuous humanitarian activities of unenlightened men. The great ones, each in his own way and often against bitter opposition, strive selflessly to inspire and uplift their fellows. No Hindu religious or social ideal is merely negative. *Ahimsa*, "noninjury," called "virtue entire" (*sakalo dharma*) in the *Mahabharata*, is a positive injunction by reason of its conception that one who is not helping others in some way is injuring them.

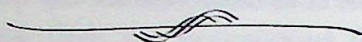
The Bhagavad Gita (III:4-8) points out that activity is inherent in man's very nature. Sloth is simply "wrong activity."

"No man shall 'scape from act
By shunning action; nay, and none shall come
By mere renouncements unto perfectness.
Nay, and no jot of time, at any time,
Rests any actionless; his nature's law
Compels him, even unwilling, into act.
(For thought is act in fancy).
... He who, with strong body serving mind,
Gives up his mortal powers to worthy work,
Not seeking gain, Arjuna! such a one
Is honourable. Do thine allotted task!"

(Arnold's translation)

CHAPTER 6

The Tiger Swami



"I have discovered the Tiger Swami's address. Let us visit him tomorrow."

This welcome suggestion came from Chandi, one of my high school friends. I was eager to meet the saint who, in his premonastic life, had caught and fought tigers with his naked hands. A boyish enthusiasm over such remarkable feats was strong within me.

The next day dawned wintry cold, but Chandi and I sallied forth gaily. After much vain hunting in Bhowanipur, outside Calcutta, we arrived at the right house. The door held two iron rings, which I sounded piercingly. Notwithstanding the clamour, a servant approached with leisurely gait. His ironical smile implied that noisy visitors were powerless to disturb the calmness of a saint's home.

Feeling the silent rebuke, my companion and I were thankful to be invited into the parlour. Our long wait there beset us with misgivings. India's unwritten law for the truth seeker is patience; a master may purposely make a test of one's eagerness to meet him. This psychological ruse is freely employed in the West by doctors and dentists!

Finally summoned by the servant, Chandi and I entered a sleeping apartment. The famous Sohong* Swami was seated on his

* *Sohong* was his monastic name. He was popularly known as the "Tiger Swami."

bed. The sight of his tremendous body affected us strangely. With bulging eyes, we stood speechless. We had never before seen such a chest or such football-like biceps. On an immense neck, the swami's fierce yet calm face was adorned with flowing locks, beard, and moustache. A hint of dovelike and tigerlike qualities shone in his dark eyes. He was unclothed, save for a tiger skin about his muscular waist.

Finding our voices, my friend and I greeted the monk, expressing our admiration for his prowess in the extraordinary feline arena.

"Will you not tell us, please, how it is possible to subdue with bare fists the most ferocious of jungle beasts, the royal Bengals?"

"My sons, it is nothing to me to fight tigers. I could do it today if necessary." He gave a childlike laugh. "You look upon tigers as tigers; I know them as pussycats."

"Swamiji, I think I could impress my subconsciousness with the thought that tigers are pussycats, but could I make tigers believe it?"

"Of course strength also is necessary! One may not expect victory from a baby who imagines a tiger to be a house cat! Powerful hands are my sufficient weapon."

He asked us to follow him to the patio, where he struck the edge of a wall. A brick crashed to the floor; the sky peered boldly through the gape, the lost-tooth space in the wall. I staggered in astonishment; he who can remove a mortared brick from a solid wall with one blow, I thought, must surely be able to displace the teeth of tigers!

"A number of men have physical power such as mine, but still lack in cool confidence. Those who are bodily but not mentally stalwart may find themselves fainting at the mere sight of a wild beast bounding freely in the jungle. The tiger in its natural ferocity and habitat is vastly different from the opium-fed circus animal!

"Many a man with herculean strength has nonetheless been terrorized into abject helplessness before the onslaught of a royal Bengal. Thus the tiger has converted the man, in his own mind, to a state as fearful as the pussycat's. It is possible for a man, owning a fairly strong body and an immensely strong determination, to

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turn the tables on the tiger, and force it to a conviction of pussycat defenselessness. How often I have done just that!"

I was quite willing to believe that the titan before me was able to perform the tiger-pussycat metamorphosis. He seemed to be in a didactic mood; Chandi and I listened respectfully.

"Mind is the wielder of muscles. The force of a hammer blow depends on the energy applied; the power expressed by a man's bodily instrument depends on his aggressive will and courage. The body is literally manufactured and sustained by mind. Through pressure of instincts from past lives, strengths or weaknesses percolate gradually into human consciousness. They express as habits, which in turn manifest as a desirable or an undesirable body. Outward frailty has a mental origin; in a vicious circle, the habit-bound body thwarts the mind. If the master allows himself to be commanded by a servant, the latter becomes autocratic; the mind is similarly enslaved by submitting to bodily dictation."

At our entreaty, the impressive swami consented to tell us something of his own life.

"My earliest ambition was to fight tigers. My will was mighty, but my body was feeble."

An ejaculation of surprise broke from me. It appeared incredible that this man, now "with Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear," could ever have known weakness.

"It was by indomitable persistency in thoughts of health and strength that I overcame my handicap. I have every reason to extol the compelling mental vigour which I found to be the real subduer of royal Bengals."

"Do you think, revered Swami, that I could ever fight tigers?" This was the first time, and the last, that the bizarre ambition ever visited my mind!

"Yes." He was smiling. "But there are many kinds of tigers; some roam in jungles of human desires. No spiritual benefit accrues by knocking beasts unconscious. Rather be victor over the inner prowlers."

"May we hear, sir, how you changed from a tamer of wild tigers to a tamer of wild passions?"

The Tiger Swami fell into silence. Remoteness came into his

gaze, summoning visions of bygone years. I discerned his slight mental struggle to decide whether to grant my request. Finally he smiled in acquiescence.

"When my fame reached a zenith, it brought the intoxication of pride. I decided not only to fight tigers but to display them in various tricks. My ambition was to force savage beasts to behave like domesticated ones. I began to perform my feats publicly, with gratifying success.

"One evening my father entered my room in pensive mood.

"Son, I have words of warning. I would save you from coming ills, produced by the grinding wheels of cause and effect.'

"Are you a fatalist, Father? Should superstition be allowed to discolour the powerful waters of my activities?'

"I am no fatalist, son. But I believe in the just law of retribution, as taught in the holy scriptures. There is resentment against you in the jungle family; sometime it may act to your cost.'

"Father, you astonish me! You well know what tigers are — beautiful but merciless! Who knows? my blows may inject some slight sanity of consideration into their thick heads. I am headmaster in a forest finishing school to teach them gentle manners!

"Please, Father, think of me as tiger tamer and never as tiger killer. How could my good actions bring ill upon me? I beg you not to impose any command that I change my way of life."

Chandi and I were all attention, understanding the past dilemma. In India a child does not lightly disobey his parents' wishes. The Tiger Swami went on:

"In stoic silence Father listened to my explanation. He followed it with a disclosure which he uttered gravely.

"Son, you compel me to relate an ominous prediction from the lips of a saint. He approached me yesterday as I sat on the verandah in my daily meditation.

"Dear friend, I come with a message for your belligerent son. Let him cease his savage activities. Otherwise, his next tiger-encounter shall result in his severe wounds, followed by six months of deathly sickness. He shall then forsake his former ways and become a monk."

"This tale did not impress me. I considered that Father had

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an evil spirit, cursed by the gods, had reincarnated as a tiger which took various demoniac forms at night, but remained a striped animal during the day. This demon-tiger was supposed to be the one sent to humble me.

"Another imaginative version was that animal prayers to Tiger Heaven had achieved a response in the shape of Raja Begum. He was to be the instrument to punish me — the audacious biped, so insulting to the entire tiger species! A furless, fangless man daring to challenge a claw-armed, sturdy-limbed tiger! The force of concentrated venom of all humiliated tigers — the villagers declared — had gathered momentum sufficient to operate hidden laws and bring about the fall of the proud tiger tamer.

"My servant further apprised me that the prince was in his element as manager of the bout between man and beast. He had supervised the erection of a storm-proof pavilion, designed to accommodate thousands. Its centre held Raja Begum in an enormous iron cage, surrounded by an outer safety room. The captive emitted a ceaseless series of blood-curdling roars. He was fed sparingly, to kindle a wrathful appetite. Perhaps the prince expected me to be the meal of reward!

"Crowds from the city and suburbs bought tickets eagerly in response to the beat of drums announcing the unique contest. The day of battle saw hundreds turned away for lack of seats. Many men broke through the tent openings, or crowded any space below the galleries."

As the Tiger Swami's story approached a climax, my excitement mounted with it; Chandi also was raptly mute.

"Amidst piercing sound-explosions from Raja Begum, and the hubbub of the terrified crowd, I quietly made my appearance. Scantily clad around the waist, I was otherwise unprotected by clothing. I opened the bolt on the door of the safety room and calmly locked it behind me. The tiger sensed blood. Leaping with a thunderous crash on the bars, he sent forth a ferocious welcome. The audience was hushed with pitiful fear; I seemed a meek lamb before the raging beast.

"In a trice I was within the cage; but as I slammed the door, Raja Begum was headlong upon me. My right hand was desperately

torn. Human blood, the greatest treat a tiger can know, fell in appalling streams. The prophecy of the saint seemed about to be fulfilled.

"I rallied instantly from the shock of the first serious injury I had ever received. Banishing the sight of my gory fingers by thrusting them beneath my waist cloth, I swung my left arm in a bone-cracking blow. The beast reeled back, swirled around the rear of the cage, and sprang forward convulsively. My famous fistic punishment rained on his head.

"But Raja Begum's taste of blood had acted like the maddening first sip of wine to a dipsomaniac long-deprived. Punctuated by deafening roars, the brute's assaults grew in fury. My inadequate defence of only one hand left me vulnerable before claws and fangs. But I dealt out dazing retribution. Mutually ensanguined, we struggled as to the death. The cage was pandemonium, as blood splashed in all directions, and blasts of pain and lethal lust came from the bestial throat.

"Shoot him!' 'Kill the tiger!' Shrieks arose from the audience. So fast did man and beast move, that a guard's bullet went amiss. I mustered all my will force, bellowed fiercely, and landed a final concussive blow. The tiger collapsed and lay quietly."

"Like a pussycat!" I interjected.

The swami laughed in hearty appreciation, then continued the engrossing tale.

"Raja Begum was vanquished at last. His royal pride was further humbled: with my lacerated hands, I audaciously forced open his jaws. For a dramatic moment, I held my head within the yawning deathtrap. I looked around for a chain. Pulling one from a pile on the floor, I bound the tiger by his neck to the cage bars. In triumph I moved toward the door.

"But that fiend incarnate, Raja Begum, had stamina worthy of his supposed demoniac origin. With an incredible lunge, he snapped the chain and leaped on my back. My shoulder fast in his jaws, I fell violently. But in a trice I had him pinned beneath me. Under merciless blows, the treacherous animal sank into semiconsciousness. This time I secured him more carefully. Slowly I left the cage.

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"I found myself in a new uproar, this time one of delight. The crowd's cheer broke as though from a single gigantic throat. Disastrously mauled, I had yet fulfilled the three conditions of the fight — stunning the tiger, binding him with a chain, and leaving him without requiring assistance for myself. In addition, I had so drastically injured and frightened the aggressive beast that he had been content to overlook the opportune prize of my head in his mouth!

"After my wounds had been treated, I was honoured and garlanded; many gold pieces were showered at my feet. The whole city entered a holiday period. Endless discussions were heard on all sides about my victory over one of the largest and most savage tigers ever seen. Raja Begum was presented to me, as promised, but I felt no elation. A spiritual change had entered my heart. It seemed that with my final exit from the cage I had also closed the door on my worldly ambitions.

"A woeful period followed. For six months I lay near death from blood poisoning. As soon as I was well enough to leave Cooch Behar, I returned to my native town.

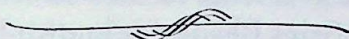
"I know now that my teacher is the holy man who gave the wise warning.' I humbly made this confession to my father. 'Oh, if I could only find him!' My longing was sincere, for one day the saint arrived unheralded.

"Enough of tiger taming.' He spoke with calm assurance. 'Come with me; I will teach you to subdue the beasts of ignorance roaming in jungles of the human mind. You are used to an audience: let it be a galaxy of angels, entertained by your thrilling mastery of yoga!'

"I was initiated into the spiritual path by my saintly guru. He opened my soul doors, rusty and resistant with long disuse. Hand in hand, we soon set out for my training in the Himalayas."

Chandi and I bowed at the swami's feet, grateful for his outline of a cyclonic life. My friend and I felt amply repaid for the long probationary wait in the cold parlour!

The Levitating Saint



"I saw a yogi remain in the air, several feet above the ground, last night at a group meeting." My friend, Upendra Mohun Chowdhury, spoke impressively.

I gave him an enthusiastic smile. "Perhaps I can guess his name. Was it Bhaduri Mahasaya, of Upper Circular Road?"

Upendra nodded, a little crestfallen not to be a news-bearer. My inquisitiveness about saints was well known to my friends; they delighted in setting me on a fresh track.

"The yogi lives so close to my home that I often visit him." My words brought keen interest to Upendra's face, and I made a further confidence.

"I have seen him in remarkable feats. He has expertly mastered the various *pranayamas** mentioned in the ancient eightfold yoga outlined by Patanjali.† Once Bhaduri Mahasaya performed the *Bhastrika Pranayama* before me with such amazing force that it seemed an actual storm had arisen in the room! Then he extinguished the thundering breath and remained motionless in a high state of superconsciousness.‡ The aura of peace after the storm was

* Methods of controlling life force (*prana*) through regulation of breath. The *Bhastrika* ("Bellows") *Pranayama* makes the mind steady.

† The foremost ancient exponent of yoga.

‡ Professor Jules-Bois of the Sorbonne said in 1928 that French psychologists have

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vivid beyond forgetting."

"I have heard that the saint never leaves his home." Upendra's tone was a trifle incredulous.

"Indeed it is true! He has lived indoors for the past twenty years. He slightly relaxes his self-imposed rule at the times of our holy festivals, when he goes as far as his front sidewalk! The beggars gather there, because Saint Bhaduri is known for his tender heart."

"How does he remain in the air, defying the law of gravitation?"

"A yogi's body loses its grossness after use of certain *pranayamas*. Then it will levitate or hop about like a leaping frog. Even saints who do not practise a formal yoga have been known to levitate during a state of intense devotion to God."

"I would like to know more of this sage. Do you attend his evening meetings?" Upendra's eyes were sparkling with curiosity.

"Yes, I go often. I am vastly entertained by the wit in his wisdom. Occasionally my prolonged laughter mars the solemnity of his gatherings. The saint is not displeased, but his disciples look daggers!"

On my way home from school that afternoon, I passed Bhaduri Mahasaya's cloister and decided on a visit. The yogi was inaccessible to the general public. A lone disciple, occupying the ground floor, guarded his master's privacy. The student was something of a martinet; he now inquired formally if I had an "engagement." His guru put in an appearance just in time to save me from summary ejection.

"Let Mukunda come when he will." The sage's eyes twinkled.

investigated and accorded recognition to the superconsciousness, which, in its grandeur, "is the exact opposite of the subconscious mind as conceived of by Freud; and which comprises the faculties that make man really man and not just a super-animal." The French savant explained that the awakening of the higher consciousness is "not to be confused with Couéism or hypnotism. The existence of a superconscious mind has long been recognized philosophically, being in reality the Over-Soul spoken of by Emerson; but only recently has it been recognized scientifically." (See page 122 n.)

In "The Over-Soul," Emerson wrote: "A man is the facade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect; but the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his actions, would make our knees bend.... We lie open on one side to the deeps of spiritual nature, to all the attributes of God."

"My rule of seclusion is not for my own comfort, but for that of others. Worldly people do not like the candour that shatters their delusions. Saints are not only rare but disconcerting. Even in scripture, they are often found embarrassing!"

I followed Bhaduri Mahasaya to his austere quarters on the top floor, from which he seldom stirred. Masters often ignore the panorama of the world's ado, out of focus till centred in the ages. The contemporaries of a sage are not only those of the narrow present.

"Maharishi, you are the first yogi I have known who always stays indoors."

"God plants His saints sometimes in unexpected soil, lest we think we may reduce Him to a rule!"

The sage locked his vibrant body in the lotus posture. In his seventies, he displayed no unpleasing signs of age or sedentary life. Stalwart and straight, he was ideal in every respect. His face was that of a rishi, as described in the ancient texts. Noble-headed, abundantly bearded, he always sat firmly upright, his quiet eyes fixed on Omnipresence.

The saint and I entered the meditative state. After an hour his gentle voice roused me.

"You go often into the silence, but have you developed *anubhava*?"* He was reminding me to love God more than meditation. "Do not mistake the technique for the Goal."

He offered me some mangoes. With the good-humoured wit that I found so delightful in his grave nature, he remarked, "People in general are more fond of *Jala Yoga* (union with food) than of *Dhyana Yoga* (union with God)."

His yogic pun affected me uproariously.

"What a laugh you have!" An affectionate gleam came into his gaze. His own face was always serious, yet subtly touched with an ecstatic smile. His large, lotus eyes held a hidden divine laughter.

"Those letters come from far-off America." The sage indicated several thick envelopes on a table. "I correspond with a few societies

* Actual perception of God.

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there whose members are interested in yoga. They are discovering India anew, with a better sense of direction than Columbus! I am glad to help them. A knowledge of yoga, like the daylight, is free to all who will receive it.

"What rishis perceived as essential for human salvation need not be diluted for the West. Alike in soul though diverse in outer experience, neither West nor East will flourish if some form of disciplinary yoga be not practised."

The saint held me with his tranquil eyes. I did not realize that his speech was a veiled prophetic guidance. It is only now, as I write these words, that I understand the full meaning in the casual intimations he often gave me that someday I would carry India's teachings to America.

"Maharishi, I wish you would write a book on yoga for the benefit of the world."

"I am training disciples. They and their line of students will serve as living volumes, proof against the natural disintegrations of time and the unnatural interpretations of the critics."

I remained alone with the yogi until his disciples arrived in the evening. Bhaduri Mahasaya began one of his inimitable discourses. Like a peaceful flood he swept away the mental debris of his listeners, floating them Godward. His striking parables were expressed in a flawless Bengali.

This evening Bhaduri expounded various philosophical points connected with the life of Mirabai, a medieval Rajputani princess who had abandoned her court life to seek the company of saints. One great sannyasi, Sanatana Goswami, refused to receive her because she was a woman; her reply brought him humbly to her feet.

"Tell the master," she had said, "that I did not know there was any Male in the universe save God; are we all not females before Him?" (A scriptural conception of the Lord as the only Positive Creative Principle, His creation being nought but a passive *maya*.)

Mirabai composed many ecstatic songs, which are still treasured in India. I translate one of them here:

If by bathing daily God could be realized
 Sooner would I be a whale in the deep;
 If by eating roots and fruits He could be known

The Levitating Saint

Gladly would I choose the form of a goat;
 If the counting of rosaries uncovered Him
 I would say my prayers on mammoth beads;
 If bowing before stone images unveiled Him
 A flinty mountain I would humbly worship;
 If by drinking milk the Lord could be imbibed
 Many calves and children would know Him;
 If abandoning one's wife could summon God
 Would not thousands be eunuchs?
 Mirabai knows that to find the Divine One
 The only indispensable is Love.

Several students put rupees in Bhaduri's slippers, which lay by his side as he sat in yoga posture. This respectful offering, customary in India, indicates that the disciple places his material goods at the guru's feet. Grateful friends are only the Lord in disguise, looking after His own.

"Master, you are wonderful!" A student, taking his leave, gazed ardently at the patriarchal sage. "You have renounced riches and comforts to seek God and teach us wisdom!" It was well known that Bhaduri Mahasaya had forsaken great family wealth in his early childhood, when single-mindedly he had entered the yogic path.

"You are reversing the case!" The saint's face held a mild rebuke. "I have left a few paltry rupees, a few petty pleasures, for a cosmic empire of endless bliss. How then have I denied myself anything? I know the joy of sharing the treasure. Is that a sacrifice? The shortsighted worldly folk are verily the real renunciants! They relinquish an unparalleled divine possession for a poor handful of earthly toys!"

I chuckled over this paradoxical view of renunciation — one that puts the cap of Croesus on any saintly beggar, whilst transforming all proud millionaires into unconscious martyrs.

"The divine order arranges our future more wisely than any insurance company." The master's concluding words were the realized creed of his faith. "The world is full of uneasy believers in an outward security. Their bitter thoughts are like scars on their foreheads. The One who gave us air and milk from our first breath

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knows how to provide day by day for His devotees."

I continued my after-school pilgrimages to the saint's door. With silent zeal he aided me to attain *anubhava*. One day he moved to Ram Mohan Roy Road, away from the neighbourhood of my home. His loving disciples had built him a new hermitage, known as Nagendra Math.*

Although it throws me ahead of my story by a number of years, I will recount here the last words given to me by Bhaduri Mahasaya. Shortly before I embarked for the West, I sought him out and humbly knelt for his farewell blessing:

"Son, go to America. Take the dignity of hoary India for your shield. Victory is written on your brow; the noble distant people will well receive you."

* His full name was Nagendra Nath Bhaduri.

Among "levitating saints" of the Christian world was the 17th-century St. Joseph of Cupertino. His feats received ample attestation from eyewitnesses. St. Joseph exhibited a worldly absentmindedness that was really a divine recollectedness. His monastery brothers could not permit him to serve at the common table, lest he ascend to the ceiling with the crockery. The saint, indeed, was uniquely disqualified for earthly duties by his inability to remain, for any long period, on the earth! Often the sight of a holy statue was enough to exalt St. Joseph in vertical flight; the two saints, one of stone and the other of flesh, would be seen circling together in the upper air.

St. Teresa of Avila, she of the great elevation of soul, found physical elevation very disconcerting. Charged with heavy organizational duties, she vainly tried to prevent her "uplifting" experiences. "But little precautions are unavailing," she wrote, "when the Lord will have it otherwise." The body of St. Teresa, which lies in a church at Alba in Spain, has for four centuries manifested incorruptibility, accompanied by a perfume of flowers. The site has witnessed innumerable miracles.

India's Great Scientist, J. C. Bose



"Jagadis Chandra Bose's wireless inventions antedated those of Marconi."

Overhearing this provocative remark, I walked closer to a side-walk group of professors engaged in scientific discussion. If my motive in joining them was racial pride, I regret it. I cannot deny my keen interest in evidence that India can play a leading part in physics, and not metaphysics alone.

"What do you mean, sir?"

The professor obligingly explained. "Bose was the first one to invent a wireless coherer and an instrument for indicating the refraction of electric waves. But the Indian scientist did not exploit his inventions commercially. He soon turned his attention from the inorganic to the organic world. His revolutionary discoveries as a plant physiologist are outpacing even his radical achievements as a physicist."

I politely thanked my mentor. He added, "The great scientist is one of my brother professors at Presidency College."

I paid a visit the next day to the sage at his home, which was close to mine. I had long admired him from a respectful distance. The grave and retiring botanist greeted me graciously. He was a handsome, robust man in his fifties, with thick hair, broad forehead, and the abstracted eyes of a dreamer. The precision in his tones revealed the lifelong scientific habit.

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"I have recently returned from an expedition to scientific societies of the West. Their members exhibited intense interest in delicate instruments of my invention which demonstrate the indivisible unity of all life.* The Bose crescograph has the enormousness of ten million magnifications. The microscope enlarges only a few thousand times, yet it brought vital impetus to biological science. The crescograph opens incalculable vistas."

"You have done much, sir, to hasten the embrace of East and West with the impersonal arms of science."

"I was educated at Cambridge. How admirable is the Western method of submitting all theory to scrupulous experimental verification! That empirical procedure has gone hand in hand with the gift for introspection that is my Eastern heritage. Together they have enabled me to sunder the silences of natural realms long uncommunicative. The telltale charts of my crescograph† are evidence for the most sceptical that plants have a sensitive nervous system and a varied emotional life. Love, hate, joy, fear, pleasure, pain, excitability, stupor, and countless other appropriate responses to stimuli are as universal in plants as in animals."

"The unique throb of life in all creation could seem only poetic imagery before your advent, Professor! A saint I once knew would never pluck flowers. 'Shall I rob the rosebush of its pride in beauty? Shall I affront its dignity by my rude divestment?' His sympathetic words are verified literally through your discoveries."

"The poet is intimate with truth, while the scientist approaches awkwardly. Come someday to my laboratory and see the unequivocal testimony of the crescograph."

Gratefully I accepted the invitation, and took my departure. I heard later that the botanist had left Presidency College, and was planning a research centre in Calcutta.

When the Bose Institute was opened, I attended the dedicatory

* "All science is transcendental or else passes away. Botany is now acquiring the right theory — the avatars of Brahma will presently be the textbooks of natural history."

— Emerson.

† From the Latin root *crescere*, to increase. For his crescograph and other inventions, Bose was knighted in 1917.

services. Enthusiastic hundreds strolled over the premises. I was charmed with the artistry and spiritual symbolism of the new home of science. Its front gate is a centuried relic from a distant shrine. Behind a lotus* pool, a sculptured female figure with a torch conveys the Indian respect for woman as the immortal light-bearer. A small temple in a garden is consecrated to the Noumenon beyond phenomena. Thought of the Divine Incorporeity is suggested by the absence of any altar-image.

Bose's speech on this great occasion might have issued from the lips of one of the inspired ancient rishis.

"I dedicate today this Institute as not merely a laboratory but a temple." His reverent solemnity stole like an unseen cloak over the crowded auditorium. "In the pursuit of my investigations I was unconsciously led into the border region of physics and physiology. To my amazement, I found boundary lines vanishing, and points of contact emerging, between the realms of the living and the non-living. Inorganic matter was perceived as anything but inert; it was athrill under the action of multitudinous forces.

"A universal reaction seemed to bring metal, plant, and animal under a common law. They all exhibited essentially the same phenomena of fatigue and depression, with possibilities of recovery and of exaltation, as well as the permanent unresponsiveness associated with death. Filled with awe at this stupendous generalization, it was with great hope that I announced my results before the Royal Society — results demonstrated by experiments. But the physiologists present advised me to confine myself to investigations in physics, in which my success had been assured, rather than to encroach on their preserves. I had unwittingly strayed into the domain of an unfamiliar caste system and had offended its etiquette.

"An unconscious theological bias was also present, which confounds ignorance with faith. It is often forgotten that He who has surrounded us with this ever-evolving mystery of creation has also

* The lotus flower is an ancient divine symbol in India; its unfolding petals suggest the expansion of the soul; the growth of its pure beauty from the mud of its origin holds a benign spiritual promise.

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implanted in us the desire to question and understand. Through many years of miscomprehension from others, I came to know that the life of a devotee of science is inevitably filled with unending struggle. It is for him to cast his life as an ardent offering — regarding gain and loss, success and failure, as one.

“In time the leading scientific societies of the world accepted my theories and results, and recognized the importance of the Indian contribution to science. Can anything small or circumscribed ever satisfy the mind of India? By a continuous living tradition and a vital power of rejuvenescence, this land has readjusted itself through unnumbered transformations. Indians have always arisen who, discarding the immediate and absorbing prize of the hour, have sought for the realization of the highest ideals in life — not through passive renunciation but through active struggle. The weakling who has refused the conflict, acquiring nothing, has had nothing to renounce. He alone who has striven and won can enrich the world by bestowing the fruits of his victorious experience.

“The work already carried out in the Bose laboratory on the response of matter, and the unexpected revelations in plant life, have opened out very extended regions of inquiry in physics, in physiology, in medicine, in agriculture, and even in psychology. Problems hitherto regarded as insoluble have now been brought within the sphere of experimental investigation.

“But high success is not to be obtained without rigid exactitude. Hence the long battery of supersensitive instruments and apparatus of my design, which stand before you today in their cases in the entrance hall. They tell you of the protracted efforts to get behind the deceptive seeming into the reality that remains unseen, of the continuous toil and persistence and resourcefulness called forth to overcome human limitations. All creative scientists know that the true laboratory is the mind, where behind illusions they uncover the laws of truth.

“The lectures given here will not be mere repetitions of second-hand knowledge. They will announce new discoveries, demonstrated for the first time in these halls. Through regular publication of the work of the Institute, these Indian contributions will reach the whole world. They will become public property. No patents will

ever be taken. The spirit of our national culture demands that we should forever be free from the desecration of utilizing knowledge only for personal gain.

"It is my further wish that the facilities of this Institute be available, so far as possible, to workers from all countries. In this I am attempting to carry on the traditions of my country. As far back as twenty-five centuries, India welcomed to its ancient universities, at Nalanda and Taxila, scholars from all parts of the world.

"Although science is neither of the East nor of the West but rather international in its universality, yet India is specially fitted to make great contributions.* The burning Indian imagination, which can extort new order out of a mass of apparently contradictory facts, is held in check by the habit of concentration. This restraint confers the power to hold the mind to the pursuit of truth with an infinite patience."

Tears stood in my eyes at the scientist's concluding words. Is

* The atomic structure of matter was well known to the ancient Hindus. One of the six systems of Indian philosophy is *Vaisesika*, from the Sanskrit root *visesas*, "atomic individuality." One of the foremost *Vaisesika* expounders was Aulukya, also called Kanada, "the atom-eater," born about 2800 years ago.

In an article by Tara Mata in *East-West*, April 1934, a summary of *Vaisesika* scientific knowledge was given as follows: "Though the modern 'atomic theory' is generally considered a new advance of science, it was brilliantly expounded long ago by Kanada, 'the atom-eater.' The Sanskrit *anus* can be properly translated as 'atom' in the latter's literal Greek sense of 'uncut' or indivisible. Other scientific expositions of *Vaisesika* treatises of the B.C. era include (1) the movement of needles toward magnets, (2) the circulation of water in plants, (3) *akash* or ether, inert and structureless, as a basis for transmitting subtle forces, (4) the solar fire as the cause of all other forms of heat, (5) heat as the cause of molecular change, (6) the law of gravitation as caused by the quality that inheres in earth-atoms to give them their attractive power or downward pull, (7) the kinetic nature of all energy; causation as always rooted in an expenditure of energy or a redistribution of motion, (8) universal dissolution through the disintegration of atoms, (9) the radiation of heat and light rays, infinitely small particles, darting forth in all directions with inconceivable speed (the modern 'cosmic rays' theory), (10) the relativity of time and space.

"*Vaisesika* assigned the origin of the world to atoms, eternal in their nature, i.e., their ultimate peculiarities. These atoms were regarded as possessing an incessant vibratory motion. . . . The recent discovery that an atom is a miniature solar system would be no news to the old *Vaisesika* philosophers, who also reduced time to its furthest mathematical concept by describing the smallest unit of time (*kala*) as the period taken by an atom to traverse its own unit of space."

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"patience" not indeed a synonym of India, confounding Time and the historians alike?

I visited the research centre again, soon after the day of opening. The great botanist, mindful of his promise, took me to his quiet laboratory.

"I will attach the crescograph to this fern; the magnification is tremendous. If a snail's crawl were enlarged in the same proportion, the creature would appear to be travelling like an express train!"

My gaze was fixed eagerly on the screen which reflected the magnified fern-shadow. Minute life-movements were now clearly perceptible; the plant was growing very slowly before my fascinated eyes. The scientist touched the tip of the fern with a small metal bar. The developing pantomime came to an abrupt halt, resuming its eloquent rhythms as soon as the rod was withdrawn.

"You saw how any slight outside interference is detrimental to the sensitive tissues," Bose remarked. "Watch; I will now administer chloroform, and then give an antidote."

The effect of the chloroform discontinued all growth; the antidote was revivifying. The evolutionary gestures on the screen held me more raptly than a "movie" plot. My companion (here in the role of villain) thrust a sharp instrument through a part of the fern; pain was indicated by spasmodic flutters. When he passed a razor partially through the stem, the shadow was violently agitated, then stilled itself with the final punctuation of death.

"By first chloroforming a huge tree, I achieved a successful transplantation. Usually, such monarchs of the forest die very quickly after being moved." Jagadis smiled happily as he recounted the life-saving manoeuvre. "Graphs of my delicate apparatus have proved that trees possess a circulatory system; their sap movements correspond to the blood pressure of animal bodies. The ascent of sap is not explicable on the mechanical grounds ordinarily advanced, such as capillary attraction. The phenomenon has been revealed through the crescograph as the activity of living cells. Peristaltic waves issue from a cylindrical tube which extends down a tree and serves as an actual heart! The more deeply we perceive, the more striking becomes the evidence that a uniform plan links every form in manifold nature."

The great scientist pointed to another Bose instrument.

"I will show you experiments on a piece of tin. The life force in metals responds adversely or beneficially to stimuli. Ink markings will register the various reactions."

Deeply engrossed, I watched the graph which recorded the characteristic waves of atomic structure. When the professor applied chloroform to the tin, the vibratory writings stopped. They recommenced as the metal slowly regained its normal state. My companion dispensed a poisonous chemical. Simultaneously with the quivering end of the tin, the needle dramatically wrote on the chart a death notice. The scientist said:

"Bose instruments have demonstrated that metals, such as the steel used in scissors and machinery, are subject to fatigue, and regain efficiency by periodic rest. The life pulse in metals is seriously harmed or even extinguished through the application of electric currents or heavy pressure."

I looked around the room at the numerous inventions, eloquent testimony of a tireless ingenuity.

"Sir, it is lamentable that mass agricultural development is not speeded by fuller use of your marvellous mechanisms. Would it not be easily possible to employ some of them in quick laboratory experiments to indicate the influence of various types of fertilizers on plant growth?"

"You are right. Countless uses of Bose instruments will be made by future generations. The scientist seldom knows contemporaneous reward; it is enough to possess the joy of creative service."

With expressions of unreserved gratitude to the indefatigable sage, I took my leave. "Can the astonishing fertility of his genius ever be exhausted?" I thought.

No diminution came with the years. Inventing an intricate instrument, the "Resonant Cardiograph," Bose then pursued extensive researches on innumerable Indian plants. An enormous unsuspected pharmacopoeia of useful drugs was revealed. The cardiograph is constructed with an unerring accuracy by which a one-hundredth part of a second is indicated on a graph. Resonant records measure infinitesimal pulsations in plant, animal, and human structure. The great botanist predicted that use of his

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cardiograph will lead to vivisection on plants instead of animals.

"Side by side recordings of the effects of a medicine given simultaneously to a plant and an animal have shown astounding unanimity in result," he pointed out. "Everything in man has been foreshadowed in the plant. Experimentation on vegetation will contribute to the lessening of animal and human suffering."

Years later Bose's pioneer plant findings were substantiated by other scientists. Work done in 1938 at Columbia University was reported by *The New York Times* as follows:

It has been determined within the past few years that when the nerves transmit messages between the brain and other parts of the body, tiny electrical impulses are being generated. These impulses have been measured by delicate galvanometers and magnified millions of times by modern amplifying apparatus. Until now no satisfactory method had been found to study the passage of the impulses along the nerve fibres in living animals or man because of the great speed with which these impulses travel.

Drs. K. S. Cole and H. J. Curtis reported having discovered that the long single cells of the fresh-water plant nitella, used frequently in goldfish bowls, are virtually identical with those of single nerve fibres. Furthermore, they found that nitella fibres, on being excited, propagate electrical waves that are similar in every way, except velocity, to those of the nerve fibres in animals and man. The electrical nerve impulses in the plant were found to be much slower than those in animals. This discovery was therefore seized upon by the Columbia workers as a means for taking slow-motion pictures of the passage of the electrical impulses in nerves.

The nitella plant thus may become a sort of Rosetta stone for deciphering the closely guarded secrets close to the very borderland of mind and matter.

The poet Rabindranath Tagore was a stalwart friend of India's idealistic scientist. To him, the sweet Bengali singer addressed the following lines:

O Hermit, call thou in the authentic words
Of that old hymn called *Sama*: "Rise! Awake!"
Call to the man who boasts his Shastric lore;
From vain pedantic wranglings profitless,

Call to that foolish braggart to come forth
 Out on the face of nature, this broad earth;
 Send forth this call unto thy scholar band.
 Together round thy sacrifice of fire
 Let them all gather. So may our India,
 Our ancient land unto herself return
 O once again return to steadfast work,
 To duty and devotion, to her trance
 Of earnest meditation; let her sit
 Once more unruffled, greedless, strifeless, pure,
 O once again upon her lofty seat
 And platform, teacher of all lands.*

* Translated by Manmohan Ghosh from the Bengali of Rabindranath Tagore, in *The Vivabharati Quarterly*, Santiniketan, India.

The "hymn called Sama" mentioned in Tagore's poem is one of the four Vedas. The other three are the Rig, Yajur, and Atharva. The sacred texts expound the nature of Brahma, God the Creator, whose expression in the individual man is termed *atma*, soul. The verb root of Brahma is *brih*, "to expand," conveying the Vedic concept of the divine power of spontaneous growth, of bursting forth into creative activity. The cosmos, like a spider's web, is said to evolve (*vikurute*) out of His being. The conscious fusion of *atma* with Brahma, soul with Spirit, may be said to be the whole import of the Vedas.

The *Vedānta*, summaries in the Vedas, have inspired many great Western thinkers. The French historian, Victor Cousin, said: "When we read with attention the philosophical monuments of the Orient — above all, those of India — we discover there many a truth so profound... that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East, and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy." Schlegel observed: "Even the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans, the idealism of reason as set forth by the Greek philosophers, appears — in comparison with the abundant life and vigour of Oriental idealism — like a feeble Promethean spark against a full flood of sunlight." (A reference to Prometheus, of Greek mythology, who stole fire from the sun and brought it to earth to help mankind).

In the immense literature of India, the Vedas (root *vid*, to know) are the only texts to which no author is ascribed. The Rig Veda (X:90, 9) assigns a divine origin to the hymns and tells us (III:39, 2) they have come down from "ancient times," re clothed in new language. Divinely revealed from age to age to the rishis, "seers," the Vedas are said to possess *nityatva*, "timeless finality."

The Vedas were a revelation by sound, "directly heard" (*śruti*) by the rishis. It is essentially a literature of chant and recitation. For millenniums, therefore, the 1,00,000 couplets of the Vedas were not written down, but were orally transmitted by *Brāhmin* priests. Paper and stone alike are subject to the obliterating effects of time. The Vedas have persisted down the ages because the rishis understood the superiority of mind

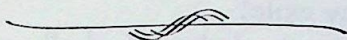
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over matter as the proper means of transmittal. What can excel the "tablets of the heart"?

By observing the particular order (*anupurvi*) in which the Vedic words occur, and with the aid of phonological rules for combinations of sounds (*śandhi*) and for the relation of letters (*śanatana*), and by proving in certain mathematical ways the accuracy of the memorized texts, the Brahmins have uniquely preserved, from a dim antiquity, the original purity of the Vedas. Each syllable (*akṣara*) of a Vedic word is endowed with significance and efficacy. (See page 327.)

CHAPTER 9

The Blissful Devotee and His Cosmic Romance



"Little sir, please be seated. I am talking to my Divine Mother."

Silently I had entered the room in great awe. The angelic appearance of Master Mahasaya fairly dazzled me. With silky white beard and large lustrous eyes, he seemed an incarnation of purity. His upraised chin and folded hands apprised me that my first visit had disturbed him in the midst of his devotions.

His simple words of greeting produced the most violent effect my nature had so far experienced. The bitterness of separation at my mother's death I had thought the measure of all anguish. Now a consciousness of separation from my Divine Mother was an indescribable torture of the spirit. I fell moaning to the floor.

"Little sir, quiet yourself!" The saint was sympathetically distressed.

Abandoned in some oceanic desolation, I clutched his feet as the sole raft of my rescue.

"Holy sir, thine intercession! Ask Divine Mother if I find any favour in Her sight!"

The sacred promise of intercession is one not easily bestowed; the master was constrained to silence.

Beyond reach of doubt, I was convinced that Master

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Mahasaya was in intimate converse with the Universal Mother. It was deep humiliation to realize that my eyes were blind to Her who even at this moment was perceptible to the faultless gaze of the saint. Shamelessly gripping his feet, deaf to his gentle remonstrances, I besought him again and again for his intervening grace.

"I will make your plea to the Beloved." The master's capitulation came with a slow, compassionate smile.

What power in those few words, that my being should know release from its stormy exile!

"Sir, remember your pledge! I shall return soon for Her message." Joyful anticipation rang in my voice, which only a moment ago had been sobbingly choked with sorrow.

Descending the long stairway, I was overwhelmed by memories. This house in Calcutta at 50 Amherst Street, now the residence of Master Mahasaya, had once been my family home, the scene of my mother's death. Here my human heart had broken for the vanished mother; and here today my spirit had been as though crucified by the absence of the Divine Mother. Hallowed walls! silent witness of my grievous hurts and final healing.

My steps were eager as I returned to my home. Seeking the seclusion of my small attic, I remained in meditation until ten o'clock. The darkness of the warm Indian night was suddenly lit with a wondrous vision.

Haloed in splendour, the Divine Mother stood before me. Her face, tenderly smiling, was beauty itself.

"Always have I loved thee! Ever shall I love thee!"

The celestial tones still ringing in the air, She disappeared.

The sun on the following morning had hardly risen to an angle of decorum when I paid my second visit to Master Mahasaya. Climbing the staircase in the house of poignant memories, I reached his fourth-floor room. The knob of the closed door was wrapped around with a cloth; a hint, I felt, that the saint desired privacy. As I stood irresolutely on the landing, the door was opened by the master's welcoming hand. I knelt at his holy feet. In a playful mood, I wore a solemn mask over my face, hiding the divine elation.

"Sir, I have come — very early, I confess! — for your message. Did the Beloved Mother say anything about me?"

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"Mischievous little sir!"

Not another remark would he make. Apparently my assumed gravity was unimpressive.

"Why so mysterious, so evasive? Do saints never speak plainly?" Perhaps I was a little provoked.

"Must you test me?" His calm eyes were full of understanding. "Might I add a single word this morning to the assurance you received last night at ten o'clock from the Beautiful Mother Herself?"

Master Mahasaya possessed control over the floodgates of my soul: again I plunged prostrate at his feet. But this time my tears welled from a bliss, and not a pain, past bearing.

"Think you that your devotion did not touch the Infinite Mercy? The Motherhood of God, which you have worshiped in forms both human and divine, could never fail to answer your forsaken cry."

Who was this simple saint, whose least request to the Universal Spirit met with sweet acquiescence? His role in the world was humble, as befitted the greatest man of humility I ever knew. In this Amherst Street house, Master Mahasaya* conducted a small high school for boys. No words of chastisement passed his lips; no rule and ferule maintained his discipline. Higher mathematics indeed was taught in these modest classrooms, and a chemistry of love absent from the textbooks.

He spread his wisdom by spiritual contagion rather than by impermeable precept. Consumed by an unsophisticated passion for the Divine Mother, the saint no more demanded the outward forms of respect than a child.

"I am not your guru; he shall come a little later," he told me. "Through his guidance, your experiences of the Divine in terms of love and devotion will be translated into his terms of fathomless wisdom."

Every late afternoon, I betook myself to Amherst Street. I

* These are respectful titles by which he was customarily addressed. His name was Mahendra Nath Gupta; he signed his literary works simply "M."

sought Master Mahasaya's divine cup, so full that its drops daily overflowed on my being. Never before had I bowed in utter reverence; now I felt it an immeasurable privilege even to tread the same ground that Master Mahasaya's footsteps sanctified.

"Sir, please wear this champak garland I have fashioned especially for you." I arrived one evening, holding my chain of flowers. But shyly he drew away, repeatedly refusing the honour. Perceiving my hurt, he finally smiled consent.

"Since we are both devotees of the Mother, you may put the garland on this bodily temple, as offering to Her who dwells within." His vast nature lacked space in which any egotistical consideration could gain foothold.

"Let us go tomorrow to Dakshineswar to the Temple of Kali, forever hallowed by my guru." The saint was a disciple of a Christlike master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

The four-mile journey on the following morning was taken by boat on the Ganges. We entered the nine-domed Temple of Kali, where the figures of the Divine Mother and Shiva rest on a burnished silver lotus, its thousand petals meticulously chiselled. Master Mahasaya beamed in enchantment. He was engaged in his inexhaustible romance with the Beloved. As he chanted Her name, my enraptured heart seemed shattered, like the lotus, into a thousand pieces.

We strolled later through the sacred precincts, halting in a tamarisk grove. The manna characteristically exuded by this tree was symbolic of the heavenly food Master Mahasaya was bestowing. His divine invocations continued. I sat rigidly motionless on the grass amid the pink feathery tamarisk flowers. Temporarily absent from the body, I soared in a supernal visit.

This was the first of many pilgrimages to Dakshineswar with the holy teacher. From him I learned the sweetness of God in the aspect of Mother, or Divine Mercy. The childlike saint found little appeal in the Father aspect, or Divine Justice. Stern, exacting, mathematical judgment was alien to his gentle nature.

"He can serve as an earthly prototype for the very angels of heaven!" I thought fondly, watching him one day at his prayers. Without a breath of censure or criticism, he surveyed the world with

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eyes long familiar with the Primal Purity. His body, mind, speech, and actions were effortlessly harmonized with his soul's simplicity.

"My Master told me so." Shrinking from personal assertion, the saint usually ended his sage counsel with this tribute. So deep was his sense of identity with Sri Ramakrishna that Master Mahasaya no longer considered his thoughts to be his own.

Hand in hand, the saint and I walked one evening on the block of his school. My joy was dimmed by the arrival of a conceited acquaintance. He burdened us with a lengthy discourse.

"I see this man doesn't please you." The saint's whisper to me was unheard by the egotist, spellbound by his own monologue. "I have spoken to Divine Mother about it; She realizes our sad predicament. As soon as we get to yonder red house, She has promised to remind him of more urgent business."

My eyes were glued to the site of salvation. Reaching its red gate, the man unaccountably turned and departed, neither finishing his sentence nor saying good-bye. Peace descended on the assaulted air.

Another day found me walking alone near the Howrah railway station. I stood for a moment by a temple, silently criticizing a small group of men with drum and cymbals who were violently reciting a chant.

"How undevotionally they use the Lord's divine name in mechanical repetition," I reflected. Suddenly I was astonished to see Master Mahasaya rapidly approaching me.

"Sir, how come you here?"

The saint, ignoring my question, answered my thought. "Isn't it true, little sir, that the Beloved's name sounds sweet from all lips, ignorant or wise?" He passed his arm around me affectionately; I found myself carried on his magic carpet to the Merciful Presence.

"Would you like to see some bioscopes?" This question one afternoon from the reclusive Master Mahasaya was mystifying to me; the term was then used in India to signify motion pictures. I agreed, glad to be in his company in any circumstances. A brisk walk brought us to the garden fronting Calcutta University. My companion indicated a bench near the *goldighi* or pond.

"Let us sit here for a few minutes. My Master asked me to

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meditate whenever I saw an expanse of water. Here its placidity reminds us of the vast calmness of God. As all things can be reflected in water, so the whole universe is mirrored in the lake of the Cosmic Mind. So my gurudeva* often said."

Soon we entered a university hall where a lecture was in progress. It proved abysmally dull, though varied occasionally by lantern slide illustrations, equally uninteresting.

"So this is the kind of bioscope the master wanted me to see!" My thought was impatient, yet I would not hurt the saint by revealing boredom in my face. But he leaned toward me confidentially.

"I see, little sir, that you don't like this bioscope. I have mentioned it to Divine Mother; She is in full sympathy with us both. She tells me that the electric lights will now go out and won't be relit until we have a chance to leave the room."

As his whisper ended, the hall was plunged into darkness. The professor, whose strident voice had been stilled for a moment in astonishment, said, "The electrical system of this hall appears to be defective." By this time Master Mahasaya and I were already across the threshold. Glancing back from the corridor, I saw that the hall was again illuminated.

"Little sir, you were disappointed in that bioscope, but I think you will like a different one." The saint and I were standing on the sidewalk in front of the university building. He gently slapped my chest over the heart.

A transforming silence ensued. Just as the modern "talkies" become inaudible motion pictures when the sound apparatus goes out of order, so the Divine Hand, by some strange miracle, stifled the earthly bustle. Pedestrians as well as the passing trolley cars, automobiles, bullock carts, and iron-wheeled hackney carriages were all in noiseless transit. As though possessing an omnipresent eye, I beheld the scenes that were behind me, and to each side, as easily as those in front. The whole spectacle of activity in that

* "Divine teacher," the customary Sanskrit term for one's spiritual preceptor. *Deva* ("god") combined with *guru* ("illuminated teacher") indicates profound reverence and respect. I have rendered it in English as simply "Master."

The Blissful Devotee and His Cosmic Romance

small section of Calcutta passed before me without a sound. Like a glow of fire dimly seen beneath a thin coat of ashes, a mellow luminescence permeated the panoramic view.

My own body seemed nothing more than one of the many shadows; though it was motionless, while the others flitted mutely to and fro. Several boys, friends of mine, approached and passed on; though they had looked directly at me, it was without recognition.

The unique pantomime brought me an inexpressible ecstasy. I drank deep from some blissful fount. Suddenly my chest received another soft blow from Master Mahasaya. The pandemonium of the world burst upon my unwilling ears. I staggered, as though harshly awakened from a gossamer dream. The transcendental wine was removed beyond my reach.

"Little sir, I see you found the second bioscope* to your liking." The saint was smiling. I started to kneel in gratitude on the ground before him. "You can't do that to me now," he said. "You know God is in your temple also! I won't let Divine Mother touch my feet through your hands!"

If anyone observed the unpretentious master and me as we slowly walked away from the crowded pavement, the onlooker surely suspected us of intoxication. I felt that the falling shades of evening were sympathetically drunk with God.

Trying with poor words to do justice to his benignity, I wonder if Master Mahasaya, and others among the saints whose paths crossed mine, knew that years later, in a Western land, I would be writing about their lives as divine devotees. Their foreknowledge would not surprise me, nor, I hope, my readers, who have come thus far with me.

Saints of all religions have attained God-realization through the simple concept of the Cosmic Beloved. Because the Absolute is *nirguna*, "without qualities," and *acintya*, "inconceivable," human thought and yearning have ever personalized It as the Universal

* Webster's New International Dictionary (1934) gives, as rare, this definition: "A view of life; that which gives such a view." Master Mahasaya's choice of a word was, then, peculiarly justified.

Autobiography of a Yogi

Mother. A combination of personal theism and the philosophy of the Absolute is an ancient achievement of Hindu thought, expounded in the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita. This "reconciliation of opposites" satisfies heart and head; *bhakti* (devotion) and *jnana* (wisdom) are essentially one. *Prapatti*, "taking refuge" in God, and *sharanagati*, "flinging oneself on the Divine Compassion," are really paths of the highest knowledge.

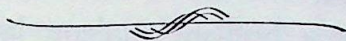
The humility of Master Mahasaya and of all other saints springs from a recognition of their total dependence (*śeṣatva*) on the Lord as the sole Life and Judge. Because the very nature of God is Bliss, the man in attunement with Him experiences a native boundless joy. "The first of the passions of the soul and the will is joy."*

Devotees of all the ages, approaching the Mother in a childlike spirit, testify that they find Her ever at play with them. In Master Mahasaya's life the manifestations of divine play occurred on occasions important and unimportant. In God's eyes nothing is large or small. Were it not for His perfect nicety in constructing the tiny atom, could the skies wear the proud structures of Vega, Arcturus? Distinctions of "important" and "unimportant" are surely unknown to the Lord, lest, for want of a pin, the cosmos collapse!

* St. John of the Cross. The body of this lovable Christian saint, who died in 1591, was exhumed in 1859 and found to be in a state of incorruptibility.

Sir Francis Younghusband (*Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. 1936) told of his own experience of cosmic joy: "There came upon me what was far more than elation or exhilaration; I was beside myself with an intensity of joy, and with this indescribable and almost unbearable joy came a revelation of the essential goodness of the world. I was convinced past all refutation that men at heart were good, that the evil in them was the superficial."

I Meet My Master, Sri Yukteswar



"Faith in God can produce any miracle except one — passing an examination without study." Distastefully I closed the "inspirational" book I had picked up in an idle moment.

"The writer's exception shows his complete lack of faith," I thought. "Poor chap, he has great respect for the midnight oil!"

My promise to Father had been that I would complete my high school studies. I cannot pretend to diligence. The passing months found me less frequently in the classroom than in secluded spots along the Calcutta bathing *ghats*. The adjoining crematory grounds, especially gruesome at night, are considered highly attractive by the yogi. He who would find the Deathless Essence must not be dismayed by a few unadorned skulls. Human inadequacy becomes clear in the gloomy abode of miscellaneous bones. My midnight vigils were thus of a different nature from the scholar's.

The week of final examinations at the Hindu High School was fast approaching. This interrogatory period, like the sepulchral haunts, inspires a well-known terror. My mind was nevertheless at peace. Braving the ghouls, I was exhuming a knowledge not found in lecture halls. But I lacked the art of Swami Pranabananda, who easily appeared in two places at one time. My reasoning (though to many, alas, it seems illogic) was that the Lord would notice my dilemma and would extricate me from it. The devotee's irrationality springs from a thousand inexplicable demonstrations of God's

instancy in trouble.

"Hello, Mukunda! I catch hardly a glimpse of you these days!" A classmate accosted me one afternoon on Garpar Road.

"Hello, Nantu! My invisibility at school seems to have placed me there in a decidedly awkward position." I unburdened myself under his friendly gaze.

Nantu, who was a brilliant student, laughed heartily; my predicament was not without a comic aspect.

"You are utterly unprepared for the finals!" he said. "I suppose it is up to me to help you!"

The simple words conveyed divine promise to my ears; with alacrity I visited my friend's home. He kindly outlined the solutions to various problems he considered likely to be set by the instructors.

"These questions are the bait that will catch many trusting boys in the examination trap. Remember my answers and you will escape without injury."

The night was far gone when I departed. Bursting with unseasoned erudition, I devoutly prayed it would remain for the next few critical days. Nantu had coached me in my various subjects, but, under press of time, had forgotten my course in Sanskrit. Fervently I reminded God of the oversight.

I set out on a walk the next morning, assimilating my new knowledge to the rhythm of swinging footsteps. As I took a shortcut through the weeds of a corner lot, my eye fell on a few loose printed sheets. A triumphant pounce; in my hand were Sanskrit verses! I sought out a pundit for aid in my stumbling interpretation. His rich voice filled the air with the edgeless, honeyed beauty of the ancient tongue.*

"These exceptional stanzas cannot possibly be of aid in your Sanskrit test." The scholar dismissed them sceptically.

But familiarity with that particular poem enabled me on the following day to pass the Sanskrit examination. Through the

* *Sanskrita*, "polished, complete." Sanskrit is the elder sister of all Indo-European tongues. Its alphabetical script is called *Devanagari*; literally, "divine abode." "Who knows my grammar knows God!" Panini, great philologist of ancient India, paid that tribute to the mathematical and psychological perfection of Sanskrit. He who would track language to its lair must indeed end as omniscient.

discerning help Nantu had given, I also attained the minimum grade for success in all my other subjects.

Father was pleased that I had kept my word and concluded my secondary school course. My gratitude sped to the Lord, whose sole guidance I perceived in my visit to Nantu's home and in my walk by the unhabitual route of the debris-filled lot. Playfully He had given a dual expression to His timely design for my rescue.

I came across the discarded book whose author had denied God precedence in the examination halls. I could not restrain a chuckle at my own silent comment:

"It would only add to this fellow's confusion if I were to tell him that divine meditation among the cadavers is a shortcut to a high school diploma!"

In my new dignity, I was now openly planning to leave home. Together with a young friend, Jitendra Mazumdar,* I decided to join a Banaras hermitage, Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, and receive its spiritual discipline.

A desolation fell over me one day at the thought of separation from my family. Since Mother's death, my affection had grown especially tender for my two younger brothers, Sananda and Bishnu, and for Thamu, my youngest sister. I rushed to my retreat, the little attic that had witnessed so many scenes in my turbulent *sādhana*.† After a two-hour flood of tears I felt singularly transformed, as by some alchemical cleanser. All attachment‡ disappeared; my resolution to seek God as the Friend of friends became adamant.

"I make one last plea." Father was distressed as I stood before him for his blessing. "Do not forsake me and your grieving brothers and sisters."

"Revered Father, how can I tell my love for you? But even greater is my love for the Heavenly Father, who has given me the

* He was not Jatinda (Jotin Ghosh), who will be remembered for his timely aversion to tigers.

† Path or preliminary road to God.

‡ Hindu scriptures teach that family attachment is delusive if it prevents the devotee from seeking the Giver of all boons, including the one of loving relatives, not to mention life itself. Jesus similarly taught: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." — *Matthew 10:37*, (Bible).

gift of a perfect father on earth. Let me go, that I someday return with a more divine understanding."

With reluctant parental consent, I set out to join Jitendra, already in Banaras at the ashram. On my arrival the young head swami, Dayananda, greeted me cordially. Tall and thin, of thoughtful mien, he impressed me favourably. His fair face had a Buddhalike composure.

I was pleased that my new home possessed an attic, where I managed to spend the dawn and morning hours. The ashram members, knowing little of meditation practices, thought I should employ my whole time in organizational duties. They gave me praise for my afternoon work in their office.

"Don't try to catch God so soon!" This ridicule from a fellow resident accompanied one of my early departures toward the attic. I went to Dayananda, busy in his small sanctum overlooking the Ganges.

"Swamiji, I don't understand what is required of me here. I am seeking direct perception of God. Without Him, I cannot be satisfied with affiliation or creed or performance of good works."

The orange-robed ecclesiastic gave me an affectionate pat. Staging a mock rebuke, he admonished a few nearby disciples. "Don't bother Mukunda. He will learn our ways."

I politely concealed my doubt. The students left the room, not noticeably bent with their chastisement. Dayanandaji had further words for me.

"Mukunda, I see your father is regularly sending you money. Please return it to him; you require none here. A second injunction for your discipline concerns food. Even when you feel hunger, do not mention it."

Whether famishment gleamed in my eye, I knew not. That I was hungry, I knew only too well. The invariable hour for the first ashram meal was twelve noon. I had been accustomed in my own home to a large breakfast at nine o'clock.

The three-hour gap became daily more interminable. Gone were the Calcutta years when I could rebuke the cook for a ten-minute delay. Now I tried to control my appetite; I completed a twenty-four-hour fast. With doubled zest I awaited the following midday.

"Dayanandaji's train is late; we are not going to eat until he arrives." Jitendra brought me this devastating news. As a gesture of welcome to the swami, who had been absent for two weeks, many delicacies were in readiness. An appetizing aroma filled the air. Nothing else offering, what could be swallowed except my pride in yesterday's fast?

"Lord, hasten the train!" The Heavenly Provider, I thought, could hardly have been included in the interdiction with which Dayanandaji had silenced me. Divine Attention was elsewhere, however; the plodding clock covered the hours. Darkness was descending as our leader entered the door. My greeting was one of sheer joy.

"Dayanandaji will bathe and meditate before we can serve food." Jitendra approached me again as a bird of ill omen.

I was in near collapse. My young stomach, new to deprivation, protested with gnawing vigour. Pictures I had seen of famine victims passed wraithlike before me.

"The next Banaras death from starvation is due at once in this hermitage," I thought. Impending doom was averted at nine o'clock. Ambrosial summons! In memory that evening meal is vivid as one of life's perfect hours.

Intense absorption had not prevented me from observing that Dayanandaji ate absentmindedly. He was apparently above my gross pleasures.

"Swamiji, weren't you hungry?" Happily surfeited, I was alone with the leader in his study.

"Oh, yes!" he said. "I spent the last four days without food or drink. I never eat on trains, filled with the heterogeneous vibrations of worldly people. Strictly I observe the shastric* rules for monks of my particular order.

* Pertaining to the *śāstras*, literally, "sacred books," comprising four classes of scripture: the *śruti*, *smṛiti*, *purāṇa*, and *tantra*. These comprehensive treatises cover every aspect of religious and social life, and the fields of law, medicine, architecture, art, etc. The *śruti*s are the "directly heard" or "revealed" scriptures, the Vedas. The *smṛiti*s or "remembered" lore were finally written down in a remote past as the world's longest epic poems, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. *Purāṇas*, eighteen in number, are literally "ancient" allegories; *tantras* literally means "rites" or "rituals": these treatises convey profound truths under a veil of detailed symbolism.

"Certain problems of our organizational work lie on my mind. Tonight at home I neglected my dinner. What's the hurry? Tomorrow I'll make it a point to have a proper meal." He laughed merrily.

Shame spread within me like a suffocation. But the past day of my torture was not easily forgotten; I ventured a further remark.

"Swamiji, I am puzzled about following your instruction. Suppose I never ask for food, and nobody gives me any. I should starve to death."

"Die, then!" This alarming counsel split the air. "Die if you must, Mukunda! Never believe that you live by the power of food and not by the power of God! He who has created every form of nourishment, He who has bestowed appetite, will inevitably see that His devotee is maintained. Do not imagine that rice sustains you nor that money or men support you. Could they aid if the Lord withdraws your life breath? They are His instruments merely. Is it by any skill of yours that food digests in your stomach? Use the sword of your discrimination, Mukunda! Cut through the chains of agency and perceive the Single Cause!"

I found his incisive words entering some deep marrow. Gone was an age-old delusion by which bodily imperatives outwit the soul. Then and there I tasted the Spirit's all-sufficiency. In how many strange cities, in my later life of ceaseless travel, did occasion arise to prove the serviceability of this lesson in a Banaras hermitage!

The sole treasure which had accompanied me from Calcutta was the sadhu's silver amulet bequeathed to me by Mother. Guarding it for years, I now had it carefully hidden in my ashram room. To renew my joy in the talismanic testimony, one morning I opened the locked box. The sealed covering untouched, lo! the amulet was gone. Mournfully I tore open the envelope and made unmistakably sure. It had vanished, in accordance with the sadhu's prediction, into the ether whence he had summoned it.

My relationship with Dayananda's followers grew steadily worse. The household was alienated, hurt by my determined aloofness. My strict adherence to meditation on the very Ideal for which I had left home and all worldly ambitions called forth shallow criticism from all sides.

Torn by spiritual anguish, I entered the attic one dawn, resolved to pray until an answer was vouchsafed.

"Merciful Mother of the Universe, teach me Thyself through visions, or through a guru sent by Thee!"

The passing hours found my sobbing pleas without response. Suddenly I felt lifted as though bodily to a sphere uncircumscribed.

"Thy Master cometh today!" A divine womanly voice came from everywhere and nowhere.

The supernal experience was shattered by a shout from a definite locale. A young priest nicknamed Habu was calling me from the downstairs kitchen.

"Mukunda, enough of meditation! You are needed for an errand."

Another day I might have replied impatiently; now I wiped my tear-swollen face and meekly obeyed the summons. Together Habu and I set out for a distant marketplace in the Bengali section of Banaras. The ungentle Indian sun was not yet at zenith as we made our purchases in the bazaars. We pushed our way through the colourful medley of housewives, guides, priests, simply clad widows, dignified *Brahmins*, and ubiquitous holy bulls. As Habu and I moved on, I turned my head to survey a narrow, inconspicuous lane.

A Christlike man in the ochre robes of a swami stood motionless at the end of the lane. Instantly and anciently familiar he seemed; for a trice my gaze fed hungrily. Then doubt assailed me.

"You are confusing this wandering monk with someone known to you," I thought. "Dreamer, walk on."

After ten minutes, I felt heavy numbness in my feet. As though turned to stone, they were unable to carry me farther. Laboriously I turned around; my feet regained normality. I faced the opposite direction; again the curious weight oppressed me.

"The saint is magnetically drawing me to him!" With this thought, I heaped my parcels into the arms of Habu. He had been observing my erratic footwork with amazement, and now burst into laughter.

"What ails you? Are you crazy?"

My tumultuous emotion prevented any retort; I sped silently away.

Retracing my steps as though wing-shod, I reached the narrow lane. My quick glance revealed the quiet figure, steadily gazing in my direction. A few eager steps and I was at his feet.

"Gurudeva!" The divine face was the one I had seen in a thousand visions. These halcyon eyes, in a leonine head with pointed beard and flowing locks, had oft peered through the gloom of my nocturnal reveries, holding a promise I had not fully understood.

"O my own, you have come to me!" My guru uttered the words again and again in Bengali, his voice tremulous with joy. "How many years I have waited for you!"

We entered a oneness of silence; words seemed the rankest superfluities. Eloquence flowed in soundless chant from the heart of master to disciple. With an antenna of irrefragable insight I sensed that my guru knew God and would lead me to Him. The obscuration of this life disappeared in a fragile dawn of prenatal memories. Dramatic time! Past, present, and future are its cycling scenes. This was not the first sun to find me at these holy feet!

My hand in his, my guru led me to his temporary residence in the Rana Mahal section of the city. His athletic figure moved with firm tread. Tall, erect, about fifty-five at this time, he was active and vigorous as a young man. His dark eyes were large, beautiful with plumbless wisdom. Slightly curly hair softened a face of striking power. Strength mingled subtly with gentleness.

As we made our way to the stone balcony of a house overlooking the Ganges, he said affectionately:

"I shall give you my ashrams and all I possess."

"Sir, I come for wisdom and God-realization. Those are your treasure troves I am after!"

The swift Indian twilight had dropped its half-curtain before my master spoke again. His eyes held unfathomable tenderness.

"I give you my unconditional love."

Precious words! A quarter-century elapsed before I had another auricular proof of his love. His lips were strange to ardour; silence suited his oceanic heart.

"Will you give me the same unconditional love?" He gazed at me with childlike trust.

"I will love you eternally, Gurudeva!"

"Ordinary love is selfish, darkly rooted in desires and satisfactions. Divine love is without condition, without boundary, without change. The flux of the human heart is gone forever at the transfixing touch of pure love." He added humbly, "If ever you find me falling from a state of God-realization, please promise to put my head on your lap and help to bring me back to the Cosmic Beloved we both worship."

He rose then in the gathering darkness and guided me to an inner room. As we ate mangoes and almond sweetmeats, he unobtrusively wove into his conversation an intimate knowledge of my nature. I was awestruck at the grandeur of his wisdom, exquisitely blended with an innate humility.

"Do not grieve for your amulet. It has served its purpose." Like a divine mirror, my guru apparently had caught a reflection of my whole life.

"The living reality of your presence, Master, is joy beyond any symbol."

"It is time for a change, inasmuch as you are unhappily situated in the ashram."

I had made no references to my life; they now seemed superfluous! By his natural, unemphatic manner, I understood that he wished no astonished ejaculations at his clairvoyance.

"You should go back to Calcutta. Why exclude relatives from your love of humanity?"

His suggestion dismayed me. My family was predicting my return, though I had been unresponsive to many pleas by letter. "Let the young bird fly in the metaphysical skies," Ananta had remarked. "His wings will tire in the heavy atmosphere. We shall yet see him swoop toward home, fold his pinions, and humbly rest in our family nest." This discouraging simile fresh in my mind, I was determined to do no "swooping" in the direction of Calcutta.

"Sir, I am not returning home. But I will follow you anywhere. Please give me your address, and your name."

"Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri. My chief ashram is in Serampore, on Rai Ghat Lane. I am visiting my mother here for only a few days."

I wondered at God's intricate play with His devotees. Serampore is but twelve miles from Calcutta, yet in those regions I had never

caught a glimpse of my guru. We had had to travel for our meeting to the ancient city of Kashi (Banaras), hallowed by memories of Lahiri Mahasaya. Here too the feet of Buddha, Shankaracharya,* and many other Yogi-Christ^s had blessed the soil.

"You will come to me in four weeks." For the first time, Sri Yukteswar's voice was stern. "Now that I have told you of my eternal affection and have shown my happiness at finding you, you feel free to disregard my request. The next time we meet, you shall have to reawaken my interest. I won't easily accept you as a disciple: there

* Shankaracharya (Shankara), India's greatest philosopher, was a disciple of Govinda Jati and of the latter's guru Gaudapada. Shankara wrote a famous commentary on a treatise, *Mandukya Karika*, by Gaudapada. With unanswerable logic, and in a style of charm and grace, Shankara interpreted *Vedanta* philosophy in a strictly *advaita* (non-dual, monistic) spirit. The great monist also composed poems of devotional love. His *Prayer to the Divine Mother for Forgiveness of Sins* bears the refrain: "Though bad sons are many, never has there been a bad mother."

Sanandana, a disciple of Shankara's, wrote a commentary on the *Brahma Sutras* (*Vedanta* philosophy). The manuscript was lost by fire, but Shankara (who had once glanced through it) repeated it word for word to his disciple. The text, known as *Panchapadika*, is studied by scholars to this day.

The *chela* Sanandana received a new name after a beautiful incident. Seated one day on a riverbank, he heard Shankara calling him from the opposite shore. Sanandana entered the water forthwith. His faith and his feet were simultaneously supported when Shankara materialized, in the swirling river, a series of lotus flowers. The disciple was thereafter known as Padmapada, "lotus-foot."

In the *Panchapadika* Padmapada offers many loving tributes to his guru. Shankara himself wrote the following beautiful lines: "No known comparison exists in the three worlds for a true guru. If the philosophers' stone be assumed as truly such, it can only turn iron into gold, not into another philosophers' stone. The venerated teacher, on the other hand, creates equality with himself in the disciple who takes refuge at his feet. The guru is therefore peerless, nay, transcendental" (*Century of Verses*, 1).

Lord Shankara was a rare combination of saint, scholar, and man of action. Though he lived only thirty-two years, many of them were spent in arduous travel to every part of India, spreading his *advaita* doctrine. Millions gathered eagerly to hear the solacing flow of wisdom from the lips of the barefooted young monk.

Shankara's reforming zeal included the reorganization of the ancient monastic Swami Order (see pp. 222-223). He also founded *maths* (monastic educational centres) in four localities—Sringeri in the south, Puri in the east, Dwarka in the west, and Badrinath in the Himalayan north.

The four *maths* of the great monist, liberally endowed by princes and the common people, gave free instruction in Sanskrit grammar, logic, and *Vedanta* philosophy. Shankara's object in locating his *maths* in the four corners of India was the promotion of religious and national unity throughout the vast land.

must be complete surrender by obedience to my strict training."

I remained obstinately silent. My guru quickly penetrated my difficulty.

"Do you think your relatives will laugh at you?"

"I will not return."

"You will return in thirty days."

"Never."

The controversial tension unrelieved, I bowed reverently at his feet and departed. Walking in the midnight darkness toward the ashram, I wondered why the miraculous meeting had ended on an inharmonious note. The dual scales of *maya*, that balance every joy with a grief! My young heart was not yet malleable to the transforming fingers of my guru.

The next morning I noticed increased hostility in the attitude of the hermitage members. They spiked my days with invariable rudeness. Three weeks passed; Dayananda then left the ashram to attend a conference in Bombay. Pandemonium broke over my hapless head.

"Mukunda is a parasite, accepting hermitage hospitality without making proper return." Overhearing this remark, I regretted for the first time that I had obeyed the request to send back my money to Father. With heavy heart, I sought out my sole friend, Jitendra.

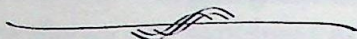
"I am leaving. Please convey my respectful regrets to Dayanandaji when he returns."

"I will leave also! My attempts to meditate here meet with no more favour than your own." Jitendra spoke with determination.

"I have met a Christlike saint. Let us visit him in Serampore."

And so the "bird" prepared to "swoop" perilously close to Calcutta!

Two Penniless Boys in Brindaban



"It would serve you right if Father disinherited you, Mukunda! How foolishly you are throwing away your life!" An elder-brother sermon was assaulting my ears.

Jitendra and I, fresh from the train (a figure of speech merely; we were covered with dust), had just arrived at the home of Ananta, recently transferred from Calcutta to the ancient city of Agra. Brother was a supervising accountant for the Public Works Department of the Government.

"You well know, Ananta, I seek my inheritance from the Heavenly Father."

"Money first; God can come later! Who knows? Life may be too long."

"God first; money is His slave! Who can tell? Life may be too short."

My retort was summoned by the exigencies of the moment and held no presentiment. (Alas, Ananta's life did come to an early close.)*

"Wisdom from the hermitage, I suppose! But I see you have left Banaras." Ananta's eyes gleamed with satisfaction; he was yet hoping to secure my pinions in the family nest.

"My sojourn in Banaras was not in vain! I found there everything my heart had been longing for. You may be sure it was not

* See chapter 25.

your pundit or his son!"

Ananta joined me in reminiscent laughter; he had had to admit that the Banaras "clairvoyant" he selected had proved a shortsighted one.

"What are your plans, my wandering brother?"

"Jitendra persuaded me to Agra. We shall view the beauties of the Taj Mahal here," I explained. "Then we are going to my newly found guru, who has a hermitage in Serampore."

Ananta hospitably arranged for our comfort. Several times during the evening I noticed his eyes fixed on me reflectively.

"I know that look," I thought. "A plot is brewing!"

The denouement took place during our early breakfast.

"So you feel quite independent of Father's wealth." Ananta's gaze was innocent as he resumed the barbs of yesterday's conversation.

"I am conscious of my dependence on God."

"Words are cheap! Life has shielded you thus far. What a plight if you were forced to look to the Invisible Hand for your food and shelter! You would soon be begging on the streets."

"Never! I would not put faith in passers-by rather than in God! He can devise for His devotee a thousand resources besides the begging bowl."

"More rhetoric! Suppose I suggest that your vaunted philosophy be put to a test in this tangible world?"

"I would agree! Do you confine God to a speculative world?"

"We shall see; today you shall have opportunity either to enlarge or to confirm my own views." Ananta paused for a dramatic moment, then spoke slowly and seriously.

"I propose that I send you and your fellow disciple Jitendra this morning to the nearby city of Brindaban. You must not take a single rupee; you must not beg, either for food or money; you must not reveal your predicament to anyone; you must not go without your meals; and you must not be stranded in Brindaban. If you return to my bungalow here before twelve o'clock tonight, without having broken any rule of the test, I shall be the most astonished man in Agra!"

"I accept the challenge." No hesitation was in my words or in my heart. Grateful memories flashed of the Instant Beneficence: my healing of deadly cholera through an appeal to Lahiri Mahasaya's picture;

the playful gift of the two kites on the Lahore roof; the opportune amulet amidst my discouragement in Bareilly; the decisive message through the sadhu outside the courtyard of the pundit's house in Banaras; the vision of Divine Mother and Her majestic words of love; Her swift heed through Master Mahasaya to my trifling embarrassments; the last-minute guidance that had materialized my high school diploma; and the ultimate boon, my living Master from the mist of my lifelong dreams. Never would I admit my "philosophy" unequal to any tussle on the world's harsh proving-grounds!

"Your willingness does you credit. I'll escort you to the train at once," Ananta said.

He turned to the openmouthed Jitendra. "You must go along — as a witness and, very likely, a fellow victim!"

A half hour later Jitendra and I were in possession of one-way tickets for the trip. We submitted, in a secluded corner of the station, to a search of our persons. Ananta was quickly satisfied that we were carrying no hidden hoard; our simple *dhotis* concealed nothing more than was necessary.

As faith invaded the serious realms of finance, my friend spoke protestingly. "Ananta, give me one or two rupees as a safeguard. Then I can telegraph you in case of misfortune."

"Jitendra!" My ejaculation was sharply reproachful. "I will not proceed with the test if you take any money as final security."

"There is something reassuring about the clink of coins." Jitendra said no more as I regarded him sternly.

"Mukunda, I am not heartless." A hint of humility had crept into Ananta's voice. It may be that his conscience was smiting him: perhaps for sending two penniless boys to a strange city; perhaps for his own religious scepticism. "If by any chance or grace you pass successfully through the Brindaban ordeal, I shall ask you to initiate me as your disciple."

This promise had a certain irregularity, in keeping with the unconventional occasion. The eldest brother in an Indian family seldom bows before his juniors; he receives respect and obedience second only to a father. But no time remained for my comment; our train was at point of departure.

Jitendra maintained a lugubrious silence as the train covered

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the miles. Finally he bestirred himself; leaning over, he pinched me painfully on a tender spot.

"I see no sign that God is going to supply our next meal!"

"Be quiet, doubting Thomas; the Lord is working with us."

"Can you also arrange that He hurry? Already I am famished merely at the prospect before us. I left Banaras to view the Taj mausoleum, not to enter my own!"

"Cheer up, Jitendra! Are we not to have our first glimpse of the sacred wonders of Brindaban? I am in deep joy at the thought of treading the ground hallowed by the feet of Lord Krishna."

The door of our compartment opened; two men seated themselves. The next train stop would be the last.

"Young lads, do you have friends in Brindaban?" The stranger opposite me was taking a surprising interest.

"None of your business!" Rudely I averted my gaze.

"You are probably flying away from your families under the enchantment of the Stealer of Hearts.* I am of devotional temperament myself. I will make it my positive duty to see that you receive food, and shelter from this overpowering heat."

"No, sir, let us alone. You are very kind; but you are mistaken in judging us to be truants from home."

No further conversation ensued; the train came to a halt. As Jitendra and I descended to the platform, our chance companions linked arms with us and summoned a horse cab.

We alit before a stately hermitage, set amidst the evergreen trees of well-kept grounds. Our benefactors were evidently known here; a smiling lad led us without comment to a parlour. We were soon joined by an elderly woman of dignified bearing.

"Gauri Ma, the princes could not come." One of the men addressed the ashram hostess. "At the last moment their plans went awry; they send deep regrets. But we have brought two other guests. As soon as we met on the train, I felt drawn to them as devotees of Lord Krishna."

"Good-bye, young friends." Our two acquaintances walked to

* Hari; an endearing name by which Sri Krishna is known to his devotees.

the door. "We shall meet again, if God be willing."

"You are welcome here." Gauri Ma smiled in motherly fashion. "You could not have come on a better day. I was expecting two royal patrons of this hermitage. What a shame if my cooking had found none to appreciate it!"

The pleasant words had a surprising effect on Jitendra: he burst into tears. The "prospect" he had feared in Brindaban was turning out as royal entertainment; his sudden mental adjustment proved too much for him. Our hostess looked at him with curiosity, but without remark; perhaps she was familiar with adolescent quirks.

Lunch was announced; Gauri Ma led the way to a dining patio, spicy with savoury odours. She vanished into an adjoining kitchen.

I had been premeditating this moment. Selecting the appropriate spot on Jitendra's body, I gave him a pinch as painful as the one he had given me on the train.

"Doubting Thomas, the Lord works — in a hurry, too!"

The hostess reentered with a *punkha*. She steadily fanned us in the Oriental fashion as we squatted on ornate blanket seats. Ashram disciples passed to and fro with some thirty courses. Rather than "meal," the description may be only "sumptuous repast." Since arriving on this planet, Jitendra and I had never before tasted such delicacies.

"Dishes fit for princes indeed, Honoured Mother! What your royal patrons could have found more urgent than attending this banquet, I cannot imagine. You have given us a memory for a lifetime!"

Silenced as we were by Ananta's requirement, we could not explain to the gracious lady that our thanks held a double significance. Our sincerity at least was patent. We departed with her blessing and an attractive invitation to revisit the hermitage.

The heat outdoors was merciless. My friend and I made for the shelter of a lordly cadamba tree at the ashram gate. Sharp words followed; once again Jitendra was beset with misgivings.

"A fine mess you have got me into! Our luncheon was only accidental good fortune! How can we see the sights of this city, without a single *pice* between us? And how on earth are you going to take me back to Ananta's place?"

"You forget God quickly, now that your stomach is filled." My

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words, not bitter, were accusatory. How short is human memory for divine favours! No man lives who has not seen some of his prayers granted.

"I am not likely to forget my folly in venturing out with a mad-cap like you!"

"Be quiet, Jitendra! The same Lord who fed us will show us Brindaban, and return us to Agra."

A slight young man of pleasing countenance approached at rapid pace. Halting under our tree, he bowed before me.

"Dear friend, you and your companion must be strangers here. Permit me to be your host and guide."

It is scarcely possible for an Indian to pale, but Jitendra's face was suddenly sickly. I politely declined the offer.

"You are surely not banishing me?" The stranger's alarm would have been comic in any other circumstances.

"Why not?"

"You are my guru." His eyes sought mine trustfully. "During my midday devotions, the blessed Lord Krishna appeared in a vision. He showed me two forsaken figures under this very tree. One face was yours, my master! Often have I seen it in meditation. What joy if you accept my humble services!"

"I too am glad you have found me. Neither God nor man has forsaken us!" Though I was motionless, smiling at the eager face before me, an inward obeisance cast me at the Divine Feet.

"Dear friends, will you not honour my home with a visit?"

"You are kind; but the plan is unfeasible. Already we are guests of my brother in Agra."

"At least give me memories of touring Brindaban with you."

I gladly consented. The young man, who said his name was Pratap Chatterji, hailed a horse carriage. We visited Madanamohana Temple and other Krishna shrines. Night descended before we had finished our temple devotions.

"Excuse me while I get *sandesh*." Pratap entered a shop near the railway station. Jitendra and I sauntered along the wide street, crowded now in the comparative coolness. Our friend was absent for some time, but finally returned with gifts of many sweetmeats.

"Please allow me to gain this religious merit." Pratap smiled

pleadingly as he held out a bundle of rupee notes and two tickets, just purchased, to Agra.

The reverence of my acceptance was for the Invisible Hand. Scoffed at by Ananta, had Its bounty not far exceeded necessity?

We sought out a secluded spot near the station.

"Pratap, I will instruct you in the *Kriya* of Lahiri Mahasaya, the greatest yogi of modern times. His technique will be your guru."

The initiation was concluded in half an hour. "*Kriya* is your *chintamani*,"* I told the new student. "The technique, which as you see is simple, embodies the art of quickening man's spiritual evolution. Hindu scriptures teach that the incarnating ego requires a million years to obtain liberation from *maya*. This natural period is greatly shortened through *Kriya Yoga*. Just as plant growth can be accelerated far beyond its normal rate, as Jagadis Chandra Bose has demonstrated, so man's psychological development also can be speeded by scientific means. Be faithful in your practice; you will approach the Guru of all gurus."

"I am transported to find this yogic key, long sought!" Pratap spoke thoughtfully. "Its unshackling effect on my sensory bonds will free me for higher spheres. The vision today of Lord Krishna could only mean my highest good."

We sat awhile in silent understanding, then walked slowly to the station. Joy was within me as I boarded the train, but this was Jitendra's day for tears. My affectionate farewell to Pratap had been punctuated by stifled sobs from both my companions. The journey once more found Jitendra in a welter of grief. Not for himself this time, but against himself.

"How shallow my trust; my heart has been stone! Never in future shall I doubt God's protection."

Midnight was approaching. The two "Cinderellas," sent forth penniless, entered Ananta's bedroom. Just as he had lightly predicted, his face was a study in astonishment. Silently I showered a table with rupee notes.

"Jitendra, the truth!" Ananta's tone was jocular. "Has not this

* A mythological gem with power to grant desires; also, a name of God.

youngster been staging a holdup?"

But as the tale was unfolded, my brother turned sober, then solemn.

"The law of demand and supply reaches into subtler realms than I had supposed." Ananta spoke with a spiritual enthusiasm never before noticeable. "I understand for the first time your indifference to the vaults and vulgar accumulations of the world."

Late as it was, my brother insisted that he receive *diksha** into *Kriya Yoga*. The "guru" Mukunda had to shoulder, in one night, the responsibility of two unsought "disciples."

Breakfast on the following day was eaten in a harmony that had been absent on the preceding morning.

I smiled at Jitendra. "You shall not be cheated of the Taj. Let us view it before starting for Serampore."

Bidding farewell to Ananta, my friend and I were soon before the glory of Agra, the Taj Mahal. White marble dazzling in the sun, it stands a vision of pure symmetry. The perfect setting is dark cypress, glossy lawn, and tranquil lagoon. The interior is exquisite with lacelike carvings inlaid with semiprecious stones. Delicate wreaths and scrolls emerge intricately from marbles, brown and violet. Illumination from the dome falls on the cenotaphs of emperor Shah Jehan and Mumtaz-i-Mahal, queen of his realm and his heart.

Enough of sight-seeing! I was longing for my guru. Jitendra and I were shortly travelling south by train toward Bengal.

"Mukunda, I have not seen my family for months. I have changed my mind; perhaps later I shall visit your master in Serampore."

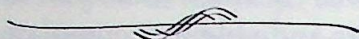
My friend, who may mildly be described as vacillating in temperament, left me in Calcutta. By local train I soon reached Serampore, twelve miles to the north.

A throb of wonderment stole over me as I realized that twenty-eight days had elapsed since the Banaras meeting with my guru. "You will come to me in four weeks!" Here I was, heart pounding, standing within his courtyard on quiet Rai Ghat Lane. I entered for the first time the hermitage where I was to spend the best part of the next ten years with India's *Jnanavatar*, "incarnation of wisdom."

* Spiritual initiation; from the Sanskrit verb-root *diksh*, "to dedicate oneself."

CHAPTER 12

Years in My Master's Hermitage



"You have come." Sri Yukteswar greeted me from a tiger skin on the floor of a balconied sitting room. His voice was cold, his manner unemotional.

"Yes, dear Master, I am here to follow you." Kneeling, I touched his feet.

"How can that be? You ignore my wishes."

"No longer, Guruji! Your wish shall be my law."

"That is better! Now I can assume responsibility for your life."

"I willingly transfer the burden, Master."

"My first request, then, is that you return home to your family. I want you to enter college in Calcutta. Your education should be continued."

"Very well, sir." I hid my consternation. Would importunate books pursue me down the years? First Father, now Sri Yukteswar!

"Someday you will go to the West. Its people will be more receptive to India's ancient wisdom if the strange Hindu teacher has a university degree."

"You know best, Guruji." My gloom departed. The reference to the West I found puzzling, remote; but my opportunity to please Master by obedience was vitally immediate.

"You will be near in Calcutta; come here whenever you find time."

"Every day if possible, Master! Gratefully I accept your authority in every detail of my life — on one condition."

"Yes?"

"That you promise to reveal God to me!"

An hour-long verbal tussle ensued. A master's word cannot be falsified; it is not lightly given. The implications in the pledge open out vast metaphysical vistas. A guru must be on intimate terms indeed with the Creator before he can obligate Him to appear! I sensed Sri Yukteswar's divine unity, and was determined, as his disciple, to press my advantage.

"You are of exacting disposition." Then Master's consent rang out with compassionate finality:

"Let your wish be my wish."

A lifelong shadow lifted from my heart; the vague search, hither and yon, was over. I had found eternal shelter in a true guru.

"Come, I will show you the hermitage." Master rose from his tiger mat. In glancing about I noticed, on a wall, a picture that was garlanded with a spray of jasmine.

"Lahiri Mahasaya!" I said in astonishment.

"Yes, my divine guru." Sri Yukteswar's tone was reverently vibrant. "Greater he was, as man and yogi, than any other teacher whose life came within the range of my investigations."

Silently I bowed before the familiar picture. Soul homage sped to the peerless master who, blessing my infancy, had guided my steps to this hour.

Led by my guru, I strolled about the house and its grounds. Large, ancient, and well built, the massive-pillared hermitage surrounded a courtyard. Outer walls were moss-covered; pigeons fluttered over the flat grey roof, unceremoniously sharing the ashram quarters. A rear garden was pleasant with jackfruit, mango, and plantain trees. Balustraded balconies of upper rooms in the two-storeyed building faced the courtyard from three sides. A spacious ground-floor hall, with high ceiling supported by colonnades, was used, Master said, chiefly during the annual festivities of *Durgapuja*. A narrow stairway led to Sri Yukteswar's sitting room, whose small balcony overlooked the street. The ashram was plainly furnished; everything was simple, clean, and utilitarian. Several

Western-style chairs, benches, and tables were in evidence.

Master invited me to stay overnight. A supper of vegetable curry was served by two young disciples who were receiving hermitage training.

"Guruji, please tell me something of your life." I was squatting on a straw mat near his tiger skin. The friendly stars were very close, it seemed, beyond the balcony.

"My family name was Priya Nath Karar. I was born* here in Serampore, where Father was a wealthy businessman. He left me this ancestral mansion, now my hermitage. My formal schooling was little; I found it slow and shallow. In early manhood, I undertook the responsibilities of a householder, and have one daughter, now married. My middle life was blessed with the guidance of Lahiri Mahasaya. After my wife died, I joined the Swami Order and received the new name of Sri Yukteswar Giri.† Such are my simple annals."

Master smiled at my eager face. Like all biographical sketches, his words had given the outward facts without revealing the inner man.

"Guruji, I would like to hear some stories of your childhood."

"I will tell you a few — each one with a moral!" Sri Yukteswar's eyes twinkled with his warning. "My mother once tried to frighten me with an appalling story of a ghost in a dark chamber. I went there immediately, and expressed my disappointment at having missed the ghost. Mother never told me another horror tale. Moral: Look fear in the face and it will cease to trouble you."

"Another early memory is my wish for an ugly dog belonging to a neighbour. I kept my household in turmoil for weeks to get that dog. My ears were deaf to offers of pets with more prepossessing appearance. Moral: Attachment is blinding; it lends an imaginary halo of attractiveness to the object of desire."

"A third story concerns the plasticity of the youthful mind. I

* Sri Yukteswar was born on May 10, 1855.

† Yukteswar means "united to Ishwara" (a name of God). *Giri* is the classificatory distinction of one of the ten ancient Swami branches.

heard my mother remark occasionally: 'A man who accepts a job under anyone is a slave.' That impression became so indelibly fixed that even after my marriage I refused all positions. I met expenses by investing my family endowment in land. Moral: Good and positive suggestions should instruct the sensitive ears of children. Their early ideas long remain sharply etched."

Master fell into tranquil silence. Around midnight he led me to a narrow cot. Sleep was sound and sweet the first night under my guru's roof.

Sri Yukteswar chose the following morning to grant me his *Kriya Yoga* initiation. The technique I had already received from two disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya — Father and my tutor, Swami Kebalananda. But Master possessed a transforming power; at his touch a great light broke upon my being, like the glory of countless suns blazing together. A flood of ineffable bliss overwhelmed my heart to an innermost core.

It was late in the afternoon of the following day before I could bring myself to leave the hermitage.

"You will return in thirty days." As I entered the door of my Calcutta home, the fulfillment of Master's prediction entered with me. None of my relatives made the pointed remarks I had feared about the reappearance of the "soaring bird."

I climbed to my little attic and bestowed affectionate glances, as though on a living presence. "You have witnessed my meditations, and the tears and storms of my *sādhana*. Now I have reached the harbour of my divine teacher."

"Son, I am happy for us both." Father and I sat together in the evening calm. "You have found your guru, as in miraculous fashion I once found my own. The holy hand of Lahiri Mahasaya is guarding our lives. Your master has proved to be no inaccessible Himalayan saint, but one nearby. My prayers have been answered: in your search for God you have not been permanently removed from my sight."

Father was also pleased that my formal studies would be resumed; he made suitable arrangements. I was enrolled the following day at nearby Scottish Church College in Calcutta.

Happy months sped by. My readers have doubtless made the

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perspicacious surmise that I was little seen in the college classrooms. The Serampore hermitage held a lure too irresistible. Master accepted my constant presence without comment. To my relief, he seldom referred to the halls of learning. Though it was plain to all that I was never cut out for a scholar, I managed to attain minimum passing grades from time to time.

Daily life at the ashram flowed smoothly, infrequently varied. My guru awoke before dawn. Lying down, or sometimes sitting on the bed, he entered a state of *samādhi*.^{*} It was simplicity itself to discover when Master had awakened: abrupt halt of stupendous snores.[†] A sigh or two; perhaps a bodily movement. Then a soundless state of breathlessness: he was in deep yogic joy.

Breakfast did not follow; first came a long walk by the Ganges. Those morning strolls with my guru — how real and vivid still! In the easy resurrection of memory, I often find myself by his side. The early sun is warming the river; his voice rings out, rich with the authenticity of wisdom.

A bath, then the midday meal. Its preparation, according to Master's daily directions, had been the careful task of young disciples. My guru was a vegetarian. Before embracing monkhood, however, he had eaten eggs and fish. His advice to students was to follow any simple diet which proved suited to one's constitution.

Master ate little; often rice, coloured with turmeric or juice of beets or spinach and lightly sprinkled with buffalo *ghee* or melted butter. Another day he might have lentil-*dal* or *channa* curry with vegetables. For dessert, mangoes or oranges with rice pudding, or jackfruit juice.

Visitors appeared in the afternoons. A steady stream poured from the world into the tranquil hermitage. My guru treated all guests with courtesy and kindness. A master — one who has realized himself as the omnipresent soul, not the body or the ego — perceives in all men a striking similarity.

^{*} Lit., "to direct together." *Samādhi* is a blissful superconscious state in which a yogi perceives the identity of the individualized soul and Cosmic Spirit.

[†] Snoring, according to physiologists, is an indication of perfect relaxation.

The impartiality of saints is rooted in wisdom. They are no longer influenced by the alternating faces of *maya*, no longer subject to the likes and dislikes that confuse the judgment of unenlightened men. Sri Yukteswar showed no special consideration to those who were powerful, rich, or accomplished; neither did he slight others for their poverty or illiteracy. He would listen respectfully to words of truth from a child; and, on occasion, would openly ignore a conceited pundit.

Eight o'clock was the supper hour, and sometimes found lingering guests. My guru would not excuse himself to eat alone; none left his ashram hungry or dissatisfied. Sri Yukteswar was never at a loss, never dismayed by unexpected visitors; under his resourceful directions to the disciples, scanty food would emerge a banquet. Yet he was economical; his modest funds went far. "Be comfortable within your purse," he often said. "Extravagance will bring you discomfort." Whether in the details of hermitage entertainment or of building and repair work or of other practical concerns, Master manifested the originality of a creative spirit.

Quiet evening hours often brought one of my guru's discourses: treasures against time. His every utterance was chiselled by wisdom. A sublime self-assurance marked his mode of expression: it was unique. He spoke as none other in my experience ever spoke. His thoughts were weighed in a delicate balance of discrimination before he permitted them the outward garb of speech. The essence of truth, all-pervasive with even a physiological aspect, came from him like a fragrant exudation of the soul. I was conscious always that I was in the presence of a living manifestation of God. The weight of his divinity automatically bowed my head before him.

If guests detected that Sri Yukteswar was becoming engrossed with the Infinite, he quickly engaged them in conversation. He was incapable of striking a pose or of flaunting his inner withdrawal. Always one with the Lord, he needed no separate time for communion. A Self-realized master has already left behind the steppingstone of meditation. "The flower falls when the fruit appears." But saints often cling to spiritual forms in order to set an example for disciples.

As midnight approached, my guru might fall into a doze with the naturalness of a child. There was no fuss about bedding. He

often lay down, without even a pillow, on a narrow davenport which was the background for his customary tiger-skin seat.

A night-long philosophical discussion was not rare; any disciple could summon it by intensity of interest. I felt no tiredness then, no desire for sleep; Master's living words were sufficient. "Oh, it is dawn! Let us walk by the Ganges." So ended many of my periods of nocturnal edification.

My early months with Sri Yukteswar culminated in a useful lesson: "How to Outwit a Mosquito." At home my family always used protective curtains at night. I was dismayed to discover that in the Serampore hermitage this prudent custom was honoured in the breach. Yet the insects were in full residence; I was bitten from head to foot. My guru took pity on me.

"Buy yourself a curtain, and also one for me." He laughed and added, "If you buy only one, for yourself, all mosquitoes will concentrate on me!"

I was more than thankful to comply. On every night that I spent in Serampore, my guru would ask me to arrange the bedtime curtains.

One night, when a cloud of mosquitoes surrounded us, Master failed to issue his usual instructions. I listened nervously to the anticipatory hum of the insects. Getting into bed, I threw a propitiatory prayer in their general direction. A half hour later, I coughed pretentiously to attract my guru's attention. I thought I would go mad with the bites and especially the singing drone as the mosquitoes celebrated bloodthirsty rites.

No responsive stir from Master; I approached him cautiously. He was not breathing. This was my first close observation of him in the yogic trance; it filled me with fright.

"His heart must have failed!" I placed a mirror under his nose; no breath vapour appeared. To make doubly certain, for minutes I closed his mouth and nostrils with my fingers. His body was cold and motionless. In a daze, I turned toward the door to summon help.

"So! A budding experimentalist! My poor nose!" Master's voice was shaky with laughter. "Why don't you go to bed? Is the whole world going to change for you? Change yourself: be rid of the mosquito consciousness."

Meekly I returned to my bed. Not one insect ventured near. I

realized that my guru had previously agreed to the curtains only to please me; he had had no fear of mosquitoes. By yogic power he could prevent them from biting him; or, if he chose, he could escape to an inner invulnerability.

"He was giving me a demonstration," I thought. "That is the yogic state I must strive to attain." A true yogi is able to pass into and maintain the superconscious state, regardless of multitudinous distractions never absent from this earth — the buzz of insects! the pervasive glare of daylight! In the first state of *samādhi* (*śabikalpa*), the devotee shuts off all sensory testimony of the outer world. He is rewarded then by sounds and scenes of inner realms fairer than the pristine Eden.*

The instructive mosquitoes served for another early lesson at the ashram. It was the gentle hour of dusk. My guru was matchlessly interpreting the ancient texts. At his feet, I was in perfect peace. A rude mosquito entered the idyl and competed for my attention. As it dug a poisonous "hypodermic needle" into my thigh, I automatically raised an avenging hand. Reprieve from impending execution! An opportune memory had come to me of Patanjali's aphorism on *ahimsa* (harmlessness).†

"Why didn't you finish the job?"

"Master! Do you advocate taking life?"

"No, but in your mind you had already struck the deathblow."

"I don't understand."

"By *ahimsa* Patanjali meant removal of the desire to kill." Sri Yukteswar had found my mental processes an open book. "This world is inconveniently arranged for a literal practice of *ahimsa*. Man may be compelled to exterminate harmful creatures. He is not under a similar compulsion to feel anger or animosity. All forms of life have an equal right to the air of *maya*. The saint who uncovers

* The omnipresent powers of a yogi, whereby he sees, tastes, smells, touches, and hears without the use of outward sensory organs, have been described as follows in *Taittiriya Aranyaka*: "The blind man pierced the pearl; the fingerless put a thread through it; the neckless wore it; and the tongueless praised it."

† "In the presence of a man perfected in *ahimsa* (nonviolence), enmity [in any creature] does not arise." — *Yoga Sutras* II:35.

the secret of creation will be in harmony with Nature's countless bewildering expressions. All men may understand this truth by overcoming the passion for destruction."

"Guruji, should one offer himself a sacrifice rather than kill a wild beast?"

"No, man's body is precious. It has the highest evolutionary value because of unique brain and spinal centres. These enable the advanced devotee fully to grasp and express the loftiest aspects of divinity. No lower form is so equipped. It is true that a man incurs the debt of a minor sin if he is forced to kill an animal or any other living thing. But the holy *shastras* teach that wanton loss of a human body is a serious transgression against the karmic law."

I sighed in relief; scriptural reinforcement of one's natural instincts is not always forthcoming.

Master, so far as I know, was never at close quarters with a leopard or a tiger. But a deadly cobra once confronted him, only to be conquered by his love. The encounter took place in Puri, where my guru had a seaside hermitage. Prafulla, a young disciple of Sri Yukteswar's later years, was with Master on this occasion.

"We were seated outdoors near the ashram," Prafulla told me. "A cobra appeared nearby, a four-foot length of sheer terror. Its hood was angrily expanded as it raced toward us. Master gave a welcoming chuckle, as though to a child. I was filled with consternation to see Sri Yukteswarji engage in a rhythmical clapping of hands.* He was entertaining the dread visitor! I remained completely quiet, inwardly ejaculating fervent prayers. The serpent, very close to Master, was now motionless, seemingly magnetized by his caressing attitude. The frightful hood gradually contracted; the snake slithered between Sri Yukteswarji's feet and disappeared into the bushes.

"Why Master would move his hands and why the cobra would not strike them were inexplicable to me then," Prafulla concluded. "I have since come to realize that our divine guru is beyond fear of hurt from any creature."

* The cobra swiftly strikes at any moving object within its range. In most cases, complete immobility is one's sole hope of safety.

One afternoon during my early months at the ashram, I found Sri Yukteswar's eyes fixed on me piercingly.

"You are too thin, Mukunda."

His remark struck a sensitive point; my sunken eyes and emaciated appearance were not to my liking. Chronic dyspepsia had afflicted me since childhood. Many bottles of tonics stood on a shelf in my room at home; none had helped me. Occasionally I would sadly ask myself if life were worthwhile with a body so unsound.

"Medicines have limitations; the divine creative life force has none. Believe that: you shall be well and strong."

Master's words instantly convinced me that I could successfully apply their truth in my own life. No other healer (and I had tried many) had been able to arouse in me such profound faith.

Day by day I waxed in health and strength. Through Sri Yukteswar's hidden blessing, in two weeks I gained the weight that I had vainly sought in the past. My stomach ailments vanished permanently.

On later occasions I was privileged to witness my guru's divine healings of persons suffering from diabetes, epilepsy, tuberculosis, or paralysis.

"Years ago, I, too, was anxious to put on weight," Master told me shortly after he had healed me. "During convalescence after a severe illness, I visited Lahiri Mahasaya in Banaras.

"Sir," I said, "I have been very sick and have lost many pounds."

"I see, Yukteswar,* you made yourself unwell, and now you think you are thin."

"This reply was far from the one I had expected; my guru, however, added encouragingly:

"Let me see; I am sure you ought to feel better tomorrow."

"My receptive mind accepted his words as a hint that he was secretly healing me. The next morning I sought him out and exclaimed exultingly, 'Sir, I feel much better today.'

* Lahiri Mahasaya actually said "Priya" (Master's first name), not "Yukteswar" (monastic name, not taken by my guru during Lahiri Mahasaya's lifetime). (See p. 104.) "Yukteswar" is substituted here and in a few other places in this book in order to avoid the confusion of two names.

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"Indeed! Today you invigorate yourself."

"No, Master!" I protested. "It is you who have helped me; this is the first time in weeks that I have had any energy."

"Oh, yes! Your malady has been quite serious. Your body is frail yet; who can say how it will be tomorrow?"

"The thought of a possible return of my weakness brought me a shudder of cold fear. The following morning I could hardly drag myself to Lahiri Mahasaya's home.

"Sir, I am ailing again."

"My guru's glance was quizzical. 'So! Once more you indispose yourself.'

"My patience was exhausted. 'Gurudeva,' I said, 'I realize now that day by day you have been ridiculing me. I don't understand why you disbelieve my truthful reports.'

"Really, it has been your thoughts that have made you feel alternately weak and strong.' My guru looked at me affectionately. 'You have seen how your health has exactly followed your subconscious expectations. Thought is a force, even as electricity or gravitation. The human mind is a spark of the almighty consciousness of God. I could show you that whatever your powerful mind believes very intensely would instantly come to pass.'

"Knowing that Lahiri Mahasaya never spoke idly, I addressed him with great awe and gratitude: 'Master, if I think that I am well and that I have regained my former weight, shall those things come to pass?'

"It is so, even at this moment.' My guru spoke gravely, his gaze concentrated on my eyes.

"I instantly felt an increase not only of strength but of weight. Lahiri Mahasaya retreated into silence. After a few hours at his feet, I returned to my mother's house, where I stayed during my visits to Banaras.

"My son! What is the matter? Are you swelling with dropsy?' Mother could hardly believe her eyes. My body was now as full and robust as it had been before my illness.

"I weighed myself and found that in one day I had gained fifty pounds; they have remained permanently. Friends and acquaintances who had seen my thin figure were overcome with amazement.

A number of them changed their mode of life and became disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya as a result of this miracle.

"My guru, awake in God, knew this world to be nothing but an objectivized dream of the Creator. Because he was completely aware of his unity with the Divine Dreamer, Lahiri Mahasaya could materialize or dematerialize or make any other change he wished in the dream atoms of the phenomenal world.*

"All creation is governed by law," Sri Yukteswar concluded. "The principles that operate in the outer universe, discoverable by scientists, are called natural laws. But there are subtler laws that rule the hidden spiritual planes and the inner realm of consciousness; these principles are knowable through the science of yoga. It is not the physicist but the Self-realized master who comprehends the true nature of matter. By such knowledge Christ was able to restore the servant's ear after it had been severed by one of the disciples."†

My guru was a peerless interpreter of the scriptures. Many of my happiest memories are centred in his discourses. But his jewelled thoughts were not cast into the ashes of heedlessness or stupidity. One restless movement of my body, or my slight lapse into absentmindedness, would suffice to put an abrupt period to Master's exposition.

"You are not here." Sri Yukteswar interrupted himself one afternoon with this observation. As usual, he was keeping relentless track of my attention.

"Guruji!" My tone was a protest. "I have not stirred; my eyelids have not moved; I can repeat each word you have uttered!"

"Nevertheless you were not fully with me. Your objection forces me to remark that in your mental background you were creating three institutions. One was a sylvan retreat on a plain, another on a

* "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." — *Mark 11:24* (Bible). God-united masters are fully able to transfer their divine realizations to advanced disciples, as Lahiri Mahasaya did for Sri Yukteswar on this occasion.

† "And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear and healed him." — *Luke 22:50-51* (Bible).

hilltop, still another by the ocean."

Those vaguely formulated thoughts had indeed been present almost subconsciously. I glanced at him apologetically.

"What can I do with such a master — one who penetrates my random musings?"

"You have given me that right. The subtle truths I am expounding cannot be grasped without your complete concentration. Unless necessary I do not invade the seclusion of others' minds. Man has the natural privilege of roaming secretly among his thoughts. The unbidden Lord does not enter there; neither do I venture intrusion."

"You are ever welcome, Master!"

"Your architectural dreams will materialize later. Now is the time for study!"

Thus incidentally, in his simple way, my guru revealed his knowledge of the coming of three important events in my life. Since early youth I had had enigmatic glimpses of three buildings, each in a different setting. In the exact sequence Sri Yukteswar had indicated, these visions took ultimate form. First came my founding of a boys' yoga school on a plain in Ranchi, then an American headquarters on a Los Angeles hilltop, and then a hermitage in Encinitas, California, overlooking the vast Pacific.

Master never arrogantly said: "I prophesy that such and such an event shall occur!" He would rather hint: "Don't you think it may happen?" But his simple speech hid vatic power. There was no recanting; never did his slightly veiled predictions prove false.

Sri Yukteswar was reserved and matter-of-fact in demeanour. There was naught of the vague or daft visionary about him. His feet were firm on the earth, his head in the haven of heaven. Practical people aroused his admiration. "Saintliness is not dumbness! Divine perceptions are not incapacitating!" he would say. "The active expression of virtue gives rise to the keenest intelligence."

My guru was reluctant to discuss the superphysical realms. His only "marvellous" aura was that of perfect simplicity. In conversation he avoided startling references; in action he was freely expressive. Many teachers talked of miracles but could manifest nothing; Sri Yukteswar seldom mentioned the subtle laws but

secretly operated them at will.

"A man of realization does not perform any miracle until he receives an inward sanction," Master explained. "God does not wish the secrets of His creation revealed promiscuously.* Also, every individual in the world has an inalienable right to his free will. A saint will not encroach on that independence."

The silence habitual to Sri Yukteswar was caused by his deep perceptions of the Infinite. No time remained for the interminable "revelations" that occupy the days of teachers without Self-realization. A saying from the Hindu scriptures is: "In shallow men the fish of little thoughts cause much commotion. In oceanic minds the whales of inspiration make hardly a ruffle."

Because of my guru's unspectacular guise, only a few of his contemporaries recognized him as a superman. The adage: "He is a fool that cannot conceal his wisdom," could never be applied to my profound and quiet master.

Though born a mortal like all others, Sri Yukteswar achieved identity with the Ruler of time and space. Master found no insuperable obstacle to the mergence of human and Divine. No such barrier exists, I came to understand, save in man's spiritual unadventurousness.

I always thrilled at the touch of Sri Yukteswar's holy feet. A disciple is spiritually magnetized by reverent contact with a master; a subtle current is generated. The devotee's undesirable habit-mechanisms in the brain are often as if cauterized; the grooves of his worldly tendencies are beneficially disturbed. Momentarily at least he may find the secret veils of *maya* lifting, and glimpse the reality of bliss. My whole body responded with a liberating glow whenever I knelt in the Indian fashion before my guru.

"Even when Lahiri Mahasaya was silent," Master told me, "or when he conversed on other than strictly religious topics, I discovered that nonetheless he had transmitted to me ineffable knowledge."

* "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." — *Matthew 7:6* (Bible).

Sri Yukteswar affected me similarly. If I entered the hermitage in a worried or indifferent frame of mind, my attitude imperceptibly changed. A healing calm descended at the mere sight of my guru. Each day with him was a new experience in joy, peace, and wisdom. Never did I find him deluded or emotionally intoxicated with greed, anger, or human attachment.

"The darkness of *maya* is silently approaching. Let us hie homeward within." With these cautionary words Master constantly reminded his disciples of their need for *Kriya Yoga*. A new student occasionally expressed doubts regarding his own worthiness to engage in yoga practice.

"Forget the past," Sri Yukteswar would console him. "The vanished lives of all men are dark with many shames. Human conduct is ever unreliable until man is anchored in the Divine. Everything in future will improve if you are making a spiritual effort now."

Master always had young *chelas* (disciples) in his ashram. Their intellectual and spiritual education was his lifelong interest. Even shortly before he passed on, he accepted, as hermitage residents, two six-year-old boys and a youth of sixteen. All those in his charge were carefully trained; "disciple" and "discipline" are etymologically and practically related.

The ashram residents loved and revered their guru; a slight clap of his hands sufficed to bring them eagerly to his side. When his mood was silent and withdrawn, no one ventured to speak; when his laugh rang jovially, children looked upon him as their own.

Sri Yukteswar seldom asked others to render him a personal service, nor would he accept a *chela's* help unless it was offered cheerfully. Master himself would wash his clothes if the disciples forgot the privileged task.

His usual garment was the traditional ochre-coloured swami robe. For indoor use he wore laceless shoes that had been made, in accordance with yogi-custom, of tiger or deer skin.

Sri Yukteswar spoke fluent English, French, Bengali, and Hindi; his Sanskrit was fair. He patiently instructed his young disciples by certain shortcuts that he had ingeniously devised for the study of English and Sanskrit.

Master was not solicitously attached to his body, but he was

cautious of it. The Divine, he pointed out, is properly manifested through physical and mental soundness. He discountenanced all extremes. To a disciple who wanted to fast for a long period, my guru said laughingly, "Why not throw the dog a bone?"*

Sri Yukteswar's health was excellent; I never saw him unwell.† To show respect for a worldly custom he permitted his students, if they wished, to consult doctors. "Physicians," he said, "should carry on their work of healing through God's laws as applied to matter." But he extolled the superiority of mental therapy, and often repeated: "Wisdom is the greatest cleanser." He told his *chelas*:

"The body is a treacherous friend. Give it its due; no more. Pain and pleasure are transitory; endure all dualities with calmness, trying at the same time to remove yourself beyond their power. Imagination is the door through which disease as well as healing enters. Disbelieve in the reality of sickness even when you are ill; an unrecognized visitor will flee!"

Master numbered many doctors among his disciples. "Those who have studied physiology should go further and investigate the science of the soul," he told them. "A subtle spiritual structure is hidden just behind the bodily mechanism."‡

Sri Yukteswar counselled his students to be living liaisons of Western and Eastern virtues. Himself an executive Occidental in

* My guru approved of fasting as the ideal natural cleansing method; but that particular disciple was overly preoccupied with his body.

† He was once ill in Kashmir, when I was absent from him (see p. 201).

‡ A courageous medical man, Charles Robert Richet, awarded the Nobel Prize in physiology, wrote as follows: "Metaphysics is not yet officially a science, recognized as such. But it is going to be.... At Edinburgh, I was able to affirm before 100 physiologists that our five senses are not our only means of knowledge and that a fragment of reality sometimes reaches the intelligence in other ways.... Because a fact is rare is no reason that it does not exist. Because a study is difficult, is that a reason for not understanding it?... Those who have railed at metaphysics as an occult science will be as ashamed of themselves as those who railed at chemistry on the ground that pursuit of the philosophers' stone was illusory.... In the matter of principles there are only those of Lavoisier, Claude Bernard, and Pasteur — the *experimental* everywhere and always. Greetings, then, to the new science which is going to change the orientation of human thought."

outer habits, inwardly he was the spiritual Oriental. He praised the progressive, resourceful, and hygienic ways of the West, and the religious ideals that give a centuried halo to the East.

Discipline had not been unknown to me; at home Father was strict, Ananta often severe. But Sri Yukteswar's training may not be described as other than drastic. A perfectionist, my guru was hypercritical of his disciples, whether in matters of moment or in the subtle nuances of ordinary behaviour.

"Good manners without sincerity are like a beautiful dead lady," he remarked on suitable occasion. "Straightforwardness without civility is like a surgeon's knife, effective but unpleasant. Candour with courtesy is helpful and admirable."

Master was apparently satisfied with my spiritual progress, for he seldom referred to it; in other matters my ears were no strangers to reproof. My chief offences were absentmindedness, intermittent indulgence in sad moods, nonobservance of certain rules of etiquette, and occasional unmethodical ways.

"Observe how the activities of your father Bhagabati are well organized and well balanced," my guru pointed out. The two disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya had met, soon after my first visit to the Serampore hermitage. Father and Master deeply admired each other. Both had built a beautiful inner life on foundations of spiritual granite, insoluble against the ages.

From a transient teacher of my earlier life I had imbibed a few erroneous lessons. A *chela*, I had been told, need not concern himself strenuously with worldly duties; when I had neglected or carelessly performed my tasks, I had not been chastised. Human nature finds such instruction very easy of assimilation. Under Master's unsparing rod, however, I soon recovered from the agreeable delusions of irresponsibility.

"Those who are too good for this world are adorning some other," Sri Yukteswar remarked one day. "So long as you breathe the free air of earth, you are under obligation to render grateful service. Only he who has fully mastered the breathless state* is freed

* *Samadhi*: superconsciousness.

from cosmic imperatives." He added dryly, "I shall not fail to let you know when you have attained the final perfection."

My guru could not be bribed, even by love. He showed no leniency to anyone who, like myself, had willingly offered to become a disciple. Whether Master and I were surrounded by his students or by strangers, or were alone together, he always spoke plainly and upbraided sharply. No trifling lapse into shallowness or inconsistency escaped his rebuke. This flattening-to-the-ego treatment was hard to endure, but my unchangeable resolve was to allow Sri Yukteswar to iron out all of my psychological kinks. As he laboured at this titanic transformation, I shook many times under the weight of his disciplinary hammer.

"If you don't like my words, you are at liberty to leave at any time," Master assured me. "I want nothing from you but your own improvement. Stay only if you feel benefited."

I am immeasurably grateful for the humbling blows he dealt my vanity. I sometimes felt that, metaphorically, he was discovering and uprooting every diseased tooth in my jaw. The hard core of egotism is difficult to dislodge except rudely. With its departure, the Divine finds at last an unobstructed channel. In vain It seeks to percolate through flinty hearts of selfishness.

Sri Yukteswar's intuition was penetrating; heedless of remarks, he often replied to one's unexpressed thoughts. The words a person uses, and the actual thoughts behind them, may be poles apart. "By calmness," my guru said, "try to feel the thoughts behind the confusion of men's verbiage."

The disclosures of divine insight are often painful to worldly ears; Master was not popular with superficial students. The wise, always few in number, deeply revered him.

I daresay Sri Yukteswar would have been the most sought-after guru in India had his speech not been so candid and so censorious.

"I am hard on those who come for my training," he admitted to me. "That is my way. Take it or leave it; I never compromise. But you will be much kinder to your disciples; that is your way. I try to purify only in fires of severity; these are searing beyond the average toleration. The gentle approach of love is also transfiguring. The inflexible and the yielding methods are equally effective if

applied with wisdom." He added, "You will go to foreign lands, where blunt assaults on the ego are not appreciated. A teacher could not spread India's message in the West without an ample fund of accommodative patience and forbearance." (I refuse to say how often, in America, I have remembered Master's words!)

Though my guru's undissembling speech prevented a large following during his years on earth, nevertheless, through an ever-growing number of sincere students of his teachings, his spirit lives on in the world today. Warriors like Alexander the Great seek sovereignty over the soil; masters like Sri Yukteswar win a farther dominion — in men's souls.

It was Master's practice to point out the simple, negligible shortcomings of his disciples with an air of portentous gravity. One day my father visited Serampore to pay his respects to Sri Yukteswar. My parent expected, very likely, to hear some words in my praise. He was shocked to be given a long account of my imperfections. He rushed to see me.

"From your guru's remarks I thought to find you a complete wreck!" My parent was between tears and laughter.

The only cause of Sri Yukteswar's displeasure at the time was that I had been trying, against his gentle hint, to convert a certain man to the spiritual path.

With indignant speed I sought out my guru. He received me with downcast eyes, as though conscious of guilt. It was the only time I ever saw the divine lion meek before me. The unique moment was savoured to the full.

"Sir, why did you judge me so mercilessly before my astounded father? Was that just?"

"I will not do it again." Sri Yukteswar's tone was apologetic.

Instantly I was disarmed. How readily had the great man admitted a fault! Though he never again upset Father's peace of mind, Master relentlessly continued to dissect me whenever and wherever he chose.

New disciples often joined Sri Yukteswar in exhaustive criticism of others. Wise like the guru! Models of flawless discrimination! But he who takes the offensive should not be defenceless. The carping students themselves fled precipitantly as soon as

Master publicly unloosed in their direction a few shafts from his analytical quiver.

"Tender inner weaknesses, revolting at mild touches of censure, are like diseased parts of the body, recoiling before even delicate handling." This was Sri Yukteswar's amused comment on the flighty ones.

Many disciples have a preconceived image of a guru, by which they judge his words and actions. Such persons often complained that they did not understand Sri Yukteswar.

"Neither do you understand God!" I retorted on one occasion. "If a saint were clear to you, you would be one!" Among the trillion mysteries, breathing every second the inexplicable air, may one venture to ask that the fathomless nature of a master be instantly grasped?

Students came, and generally went. Those who craved an easy path — that of instant sympathy and comforting recognitions of one's merits — did not find it at the hermitage. Master offered his disciples shelter and shepherding for the aeons, but many students miserly demanded ego-balm as well. They departed; preferring, before any humility, life's countless humiliations. Sri Yukteswar's blazing rays, the open penetrating sunshine of his wisdom, were too powerful for their spiritual sickness. They sought out some lesser teacher, who, shading them with flattery, permitted the fitful sleep of ignorance.

During my early months with Master I experienced a sensitive fear of his reprimands. I soon saw that his verbal vivisections were performed only on persons who, like myself, had asked him to discipline them. If any writhing student made a protest, Sri Yukteswar, unoffended, would fall into silence. His words were never wrathful, but impersonal with wisdom.

Master's rebukes were not aimed at casual visitors; he seldom remarked on their defects, even if conspicuous. But toward students who sought his counsel, Sri Yukteswar felt a serious responsibility. Brave indeed is the guru who undertakes to transform the crude ore of ego-permeated humanity! A saint's courage is rooted in his compassion for *maya*-bewildered men, the stumbling eyeless of the world.

After I had abandoned underlying resentment, I found a marked decrease in my chastisement. In a very subtle way, Master melted into comparative clemency. In time I demolished every wall of rationalization and subconscious* reservation behind which the human personality generally shields itself. The reward was an effortless harmony with my guru. I discovered him then to be trusting, considerate, and silently loving. Undemonstrative, however, he bestowed no word of affection.

My own temperament is principally devotional. It was disconcerting at first to find that my guru, saturated with *jnana* but seemingly dry of *bhakti*,† expressed himself chiefly in terms of cold spiritual mathematics. But, as I attuned myself to his nature, I discovered no diminution but rather an increase in my devotional approach to God. A Self-realized master is fully able to guide his various disciples along the natural lines of their essential bias.

My relationship with Sri Yukteswar was somewhat inarticulate, yet possessed a hidden eloquence. Often I found his silent signature on my thoughts, rendering speech inutile. Quietly sitting beside him, I would feel his bounty pouring peacefully over my being.

Master's impartial justice was notably demonstrated during the summer vacation of my first college year. I had been looking forward to uninterrupted months in Serampore with my guru.

"You may be in charge of the hermitage." Sri Yukteswar was pleased over my enthusiastic arrival. "Your duties will be the reception of guests, and supervision of the work of the other disciples."

Kumar, a young villager from east Bengal, was accepted a fortnight later for ashram training. Remarkably intelligent, he

* "Our conscious and subconscious being is crowned by a superconsciousness," Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal pointed out in a lecture in New York. "Many years ago the English psychologist, F. W. H. Myers, suggested that 'hidden in the deep of our being is a rubbish heap as well as a treasure house.' In contrast to the psychology that centres all its researches on the subconscious in man's nature, the new psychology of the superconscious focuses its attention upon the treasure house — the region that alone can explain the great, unselfish, heroic deeds of men."

† *Jnana*, wisdom; and *bhakti*, devotion: two of the main paths to God.

quickly won Master's affection. For some unfathomable reason, Sri Yukteswar adopted an uncritical attitude toward the new resident.

"Mukunda, let Kumar assume your duties. Employ your own time in sweeping and cooking." Master issued these instructions after the new boy had been with us for a month.

Exalted to leadership, Kumar exercised a petty household tyranny. In silent mutiny, the other disciples continued to seek me out for daily counsel. This situation continued for three weeks; then I overheard a conversation between Kumar and Master.

"Mukunda is impossible!" the boy said. "You made me supervisor, yet the others go to him and obey him."

"That's why I assigned him to the kitchen and you to the parlour — so you might come to realize that a worthy leader has the desire to serve, not to dominate." Sri Yukteswar's withering tones were new to Kumar. "You wanted Mukunda's position, but could not maintain it by merit. Return now to your earlier work as cook's assistant."

After this humbling incident, Master resumed toward Kumar a former attitude of unwonted indulgence. Who may solve the mystery of attraction? In Kumar our guru discovered a charming fount — one, however, that did not spurt for the fellow disciples. Though the new boy was obviously Sri Yukteswar's favourite, I felt no dismay. Personal idiosyncrasies, possessed even by masters, lend a rich complexity to the pattern of life. My nature is seldom commandeered by a detail; I was seeking from Sri Yukteswar a higher benefit than outward praise.

Kumar spoke venomously to me one day without reason; I was deeply hurt.

"Your head is swelling to the bursting point!" I added a warning whose truth I felt intuitively: "Unless you mend your ways, someday you will be asked to leave this ashram."

Laughing sarcastically, Kumar repeated my remark to our guru, who had just entered the room. Fully expecting to be scolded, I retired meekly to a corner.

"Maybe Mukunda is right." Master's reply to the boy came with unusual coldness.

A year later, Kumar set out for a visit to his childhood home. He ignored the quiet disapproval of Sri Yukteswar, who never authoritatively controlled his disciples' movements. On the boy's return to Serampore in a few months, a change was unpleasantly apparent. Gone was the stately Kumar with serenely glowing face. Only an undistinguished peasant stood before us, one who had lately acquired a number of evil habits.

Master summoned me and brokenheartedly discussed the fact that the boy was now unsuited to the monastic hermitage life.

"Mukunda, I will leave it to you to instruct Kumar to leave the ashram tomorrow; I can't do it!" Tears stood in Sri Yukteswar's eyes, but he controlled himself quickly. "The boy would never have fallen to these depths had he listened to me and not gone away to mix with undesirable companions. He has rejected my protection; the callous world must be his guru still."

Kumar's departure brought me no elation; sadly I wondered how one with the power to win a master's love could readily respond to worldly allures. Enjoyments of wine and sex are rooted in the natural man; to appreciate them one requires no delicacy of perception. Sense wiles are comparable to the evergreen oleander, fragrant with its rosy-coloured flowers: every part of the plant is poisonous.* The land of healing lies within, radiant with the happiness that is blindly sought in a thousand outer directions.

"Keen intelligence is two-edged," Master once remarked in reference to Kumar's brilliant mind. "It may be used constructively or destructively, like a knife, either to cut the boil of ignorance, or to decapitate oneself. Intelligence is rightly guided only after the mind has acknowledged the inescapability of spiritual law."

My guru mixed freely with men and women disciples, treating all as his children. Perceiving their soul equality, he made no distinction and showed no partiality.

* "Man in his waking state puts forth innumerable efforts for experiencing sensual pleasures; when the entire group of sensory organs is fatigued, he forgets even the pleasure on hand and goes to sleep in order to enjoy rest in the soul, his own nature," Shankara, the great Vedantist, has written. "Ultrasensual bliss is thus extremely easy of attainment and is far superior to sense delights, which always end in disgust."

"In sleep, you do not know whether you are a man or a woman," he said. "Just as a man, impersonating a woman, does not become one, so the soul, impersonating both man and woman, remains changeless. The soul is the immutable, unqualified image of God."

Sri Yukteswar never avoided or blamed women as the cause of "man's downfall." He pointed out that women, too, have to face temptation from the opposite sex. I once asked Master why a great ancient saint had called women "the door to hell."

"A girl must have proved very troublesome to his peace of mind in his early life," my guru answered caustically. "Otherwise he would have denounced, not woman, but some imperfection in his own self-control."

If a visitor dared to relate a suggestive story in the hermitage, Master would maintain an unresponsive silence. "Do not allow yourself to be thrashed by the provoking whip of a beautiful face," he told the disciples. "How can sense slaves enjoy the world? Its subtle flavours escape them while they grovel in primal mud. All nice discriminations are lost to the man of elemental lusts."

Students seeking to escape from the *maya*-induced sex delusion received from Sri Yukteswar patient and understanding counsel.

"Just as hunger, not greed, has a legitimate purpose, so the sexual instinct has been implanted by Nature solely for the propagation of the species, not for the kindling of insatiable longings," he said. "Destroy wrong desires now; otherwise they will remain with you after the astral body has been separated from its physical casing. Even when the flesh is weak, the mind should be constantly resistant. If temptation assails you with cruel force, overcome it by impersonal analysis and indomitable will. Every natural passion can be mastered.

"Conserve your powers. Be like the capacious ocean, absorbing quietly all the tributary rivers of the senses. Daily renewed sense yearnings sap your inner peace; they are like openings in a reservoir that permit vital waters to be wasted in the desert soil of materialism. The forceful, activating impulse of wrong desire is the greatest enemy to the happiness of man. Roam in the world as a lion of self-control; don't let the frogs of sense

weakness kick you around!"

A true devotee is finally freed from all instinctive compulsions. He transforms his need for human affection into aspiration for God alone — a love solitary because omnipresent.

Sri Yukteswar's mother lived in the Rana Mahal district of Banaras where I had first visited my guru. Gracious and kindly, she was yet a woman of very decided opinions. I stood on her balcony one day and watched mother and son talking together. In his quiet, sensible way, Master was trying to convince her about something. He was apparently unsuccessful, for she shook her head with great vigour.

"Nay, nay, my son, go away now! Your wise words are not for me! I am not your disciple!"

Sri Yukteswar backed away without further argument, like a scolded child. I was touched at his great respect for his mother even in her unreasonable moods. She saw him only as her little boy, not as a sage. There was a charm about the trifling incident; it supplied a sidelight on my guru's unusual nature, inwardly humble and outwardly unbendable.

The monastic regulations do not permit a swami to retain connection with worldly ties after their formal severance. He may not perform the ceremonial family rites that are obligatory on the householder. Yet Shankara, reorganizer of the ancient Swami Order, disregarded the injunctions. After the death of his beloved mother, he cremated her body with heavenly fire that he caused to spurt from his upraised hand.

Sri Yukteswar also ignored the restrictions — in a fashion less spectacular. When his mother passed on, he arranged for crematory services by the holy Ganges in Banaras and fed many Brahmins, in conformance with householder customs.

The shastric prohibitions were intended to help swamis to overcome narrow identifications. Shankara and Sri Yukteswar had wholly merged their being in the Impersonal Spirit; they needed no rescue by rule. Sometimes, too, a master purposely ignores a canon in order to uphold its principle as superior to and independent of form. Thus Jesus plucked ears of corn on the day of rest. To the inevitable critics he said: "The sabbath was made for

man, and not man for the sabbath."*

With the exception of the scriptures, Sri Yukteswar read little. Yet he was invariably acquainted with the latest scientific discoveries and other advancements of knowledge.† A brilliant conversationalist, he enjoyed an exchange of views on countless topics with his guests. My guru's ready wit and rollicking laugh enlivened every discussion. Often grave, Master was never gloomy. "To seek the Lord, men need not 'disfigure their faces,'" he would say, quoting from the Bible.‡ "Remember that finding God will mean the funeral of all sorrows."

Among the philosophers, professors, lawyers, and scientists who came to the hermitage, a number arrived for their first visit with the thought of meeting an orthodox religionist. Occasionally a supercilious smile or a glance of amused tolerance would betray that the newcomers expected nothing more than a few pious platitudes. After talking with Sri Yukteswar and discovering that he possessed precise insight into their specialized fields of knowledge, the visitors would depart reluctantly.

My guru ordinarily was gentle and affable to guests; his welcome was given with charming cordiality. Yet inveterate egotists sometimes suffered an invigorating shock. They confronted in Master either a frigid indifference or a formidable opposition: ice or iron!

A noted chemist once crossed swords with Sri Yukteswar. The visitor would not admit the existence of God, inasmuch as science has devised no means of detecting Him.

"So you have inexplicably failed to isolate the Supreme Power in your test tubes!" Master's gaze was stern. "I recommend a new experiment: examine your thoughts unremittingly for twenty-four hours. Then wonder no longer at God's absence."

A celebrated scholar received a similar jolt. It came during his

* *Mark 2:27* (Bible).

† When he so desired, Master could instantly attune himself to the mind of any man (a yogic power mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* III:19). His powers as a human radio, and the nature of thoughts, are explained on pp. 151-52.

‡ *Matthew 6:16* (Bible).

first visit to the ashram. The rafters resounded as the guest recited passages from the *Mahabharata*, *Upanishads*,* and *bhāṣyas* (commentaries) of Shankara.

"I am waiting to hear you." Sri Yukteswar's tone was inquiring, as though silence had reigned. The pundit was puzzled.

"Quotations there have been, in superabundance." Master's words convulsed me with mirth, as I squatted in my corner at a respectful distance from the visitor. "But what original commentary can you supply, from the uniqueness of your particular life? What holy text have you absorbed and made your own? In what ways have these timeless truths renovated your nature? Are you content to be a hollow victrola, mechanically repeating the words of other men?"

"I give up!" The scholar's chagrin was comical. "I have no inner realization."

For the first time, perhaps, he understood that discerning placement of a comma does not atone for a spiritual coma.

"These bloodless pedants smell unduly of the lamp," my guru remarked after the departure of the chastened one. "They consider philosophy to be a gentle intellectual setting-up exercise. Their elevated thoughts are carefully unrelated either to the crudity of outward action or to any scourging inner discipline!"

Master stressed on other occasions the futility of mere book learning.

"Do not confuse understanding with a larger vocabulary," he remarked. "Sacred writings are beneficial in stimulating desire for inward realization, if one stanza at a time is slowly assimilated. Otherwise, continual intellectual study may result in vanity, false satisfaction, and undigested knowledge."

Sri Yukteswar related one of his own experiences in scriptural edification. The scene was a forest hermitage in eastern Bengal,

* The *Upanishads* or *Vedānta* (lit., "end of the Vedas"), which occur in certain parts of the four Vedas, are essential summaries that form the doctrinal basis of the Hindu religion. Schopenhauer praised their "deep, original, and sublime thoughts," and said: "Access to the Vedas [through Western translations of the *Upanishads*] is, in my eyes, the greatest privilege this century may claim over all previous centuries."

where he observed the procedure of a renowned teacher, Dabru Ballav. His method, at once simple and difficult, was common in ancient India.

Dabru Ballav had gathered his disciples around him in the sylvan solitudes. The holy Bhagavad Gita was open before them. Steadfastly they looked at one passage for half an hour, then closed their eyes. Another half hour slipped away. The master gave a brief comment. Motionless, they meditated again for an hour. Finally the guru spoke.

"Do you now understand the stanza?"

"Yes, sir." One in the group ventured this assertion.

"No, not fully. Seek the spiritual vitality that has given these words the power to rejuvenate India century after century." Another hour passed in silence. The master dismissed the students, and turned to Sri Yukteswar.

"Do you know the Bhagavad Gita?"

"No, sir, not really; though my eyes and mind have run through its pages many times."

"Hundreds have replied to me differently!" The great sage smiled at Master in blessing. "If one busies himself with an outer display of scriptural wealth, what time is left for silent inward diving after the priceless pearls?"

Sri Yukteswar directed the study of his own disciples by the same intensive method of one-pointedness. "Wisdom is not assimilated with the eyes, but with the atoms," he said. "When your conviction of a truth is not merely in your brain but in your being, you may diffidently vouch for its meaning." He discouraged any tendency a student might have to consider book knowledge a necessary step to spiritual realization.

"The rishis wrote in one sentence profundities that commensurate scholars busy themselves over for generations," he said. "Endless literary controversy is for sluggard minds. What more quickly liberating thought than 'God is' — nay, 'God'?"

But man does not easily return to simplicity. It is seldom "God" for an intellectualist, but rather learned pomposities. His ego is pleased, that he can grasp such erudition.

Men who were pridefully conscious of their wealth or worldly

position were likely, in Master's presence, to add humility to their other possessions. On one occasion a local magistrate requested an interview at the seaside hermitage in Puri. The man, who was reputed to be ruthless, had it well within his power to dispossess us of the ashram. I mentioned this fact to my guru. But he seated himself with an uncompromising air, and did not rise to greet the visitor.

Slightly nervous, I squatted near the door. Sri Yukteswar failed to ask me to fetch a chair for the magistrate, who had to be content with a wooden box. There was no fulfillment of the man's obvious expectation that his importance would be ceremoniously acknowledged.

A metaphysical discussion ensued. The guest blundered through misinterpretations of the scriptures. As his accuracy sank, his ire rose.

"Do you know that I stood first in the M.A. examination?" Reason had forsaken him, but he could still shout.

"Mr. Magistrate, you forget that this is not your courtroom," Master replied evenly. "From your childish remarks one would surmise that your college career had been unremarkable. A university degree, in any case, is not related to Vedic realization. Saints are not produced in batches every semester like accountants."

After a stunned silence, the visitor laughed heartily.

"This is my first encounter with a heavenly magistrate," he said. Later he made a formal request, couched in the legal terms that were evidently part and parcel of his being, to be accepted as a "probationary" disciple.

On several occasions Sri Yukteswar, like Lahiri Mahasaya, discouraged "unripe" students who wished to join the Swami Order. "To wear the ochre robe when one lacks God-realization is misleading to society," the two masters said. "Forget the outward symbols of renunciation, which may injure you by inducing a false pride. Nothing matters except your steady, daily spiritual advancement; for that, use *Kriya Yoga*."

In measuring the worth of a man, a saint employs an invariable criterion, one far different from the shifting yardsticks of the world. Humanity — so variegated in its own eyes! — is seen by a master to be divided into only two classes: ignorant men who are not seeking

God, and wise men who are.

My guru personally attended to the details connected with the management of his property. Unscrupulous persons on various occasions attempted to secure possession of Master's ancestral land. With determination and even by instigating lawsuits, Sri Yukteswar outwitted every opponent. He underwent these painful experiences from a desire never to be a begging guru, or a burden on his disciples.

His financial independence was one reason why my alarmingly outspoken master was innocent of the cunningings of diplomacy. Unlike teachers who have to flatter their supporters, my guru was impervious to the influences, open or subtle, of others' wealth. Never did I hear him ask or even hint for money for any purpose. His hermitage training was given free to all disciples.

A court deputy arrived one day at the Serampore ashram to serve a legal summons. A disciple named Kanai and I ushered the man into Master's presence.

The officer's attitude toward Sri Yukteswar was offensive. "It will do you good to leave the shadows of your hermitage and breathe the honest air of a courtroom," he said contemptuously.

I could not contain myself. "Another word of your insolence and you will be on the floor!" I advanced threateningly.

Kanai, also, was shouting at the deputy. "You wretch! Dare you bring your blasphemies into this sacred ashram?"

But Master stood protectingly in front of his abuser. "Don't get excited over nothing. This man is only doing his rightful duty."

The officer, dazed at his varying reception, respectfully offered a word of apology and sped away.

Amazing it was to find that a master with such a fiery will could be so calm within. He fitted the Vedic definition of a man of God: "Softer than the flower, where kindness is concerned; stronger than the thunder, where principles are at stake."

There are always those in this world who, in Browning's words, "endure no light, being themselves obscure." Occasionally an outsider, fevered over some imaginary grievance, would berate Sri Yukteswar. My imperturbable guru would listen politely, analyzing himself to see if any shred of truth lay within the denunciation.

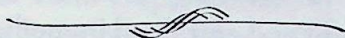
These scenes would bring to my mind one of Master's inimitable observations: "Some people try to be tall by cutting off the heads of others!"

The unfailing composure of a saint is impressive beyond any sermon. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."*

I often reflected that my majestic master could easily have been an emperor or world-shaking warrior had his mind been centered on fame or worldly achievement. He had chosen instead to storm those inner citadels of wrath and egotism whose fall is the height of a man.

* *Proverbs* 16:32 (Bible).

The Sleepless Saint



"Please permit me to go to the Himalayas. I hope in unbroken solitude to achieve continuous divine communion."

I actually once addressed these ungrateful words to my master. Seized by one of the unpredictable delusions that occasionally assail the devotee, I felt a growing impatience with hermitage duties and college studies. A feebly extenuating circumstance is that my proposal was made when I had known Sri Yukteswar for only six months. Not yet had I fully surveyed his towering stature.

"Many hillmen live in the Himalayas, yet possess no God-perception." My guru's answer came slowly and simply. "Wisdom is better sought from a man of realization than from an inert mountain."

Ignoring Master's plain hint that he, and not a hill, was my teacher, I repeated my plea. Sri Yukteswar vouchsafed no reply. I took his silence for consent—a precarious but convenient interpretation.

In my Calcutta home that evening, I busied myself with travel preparations. Tying a few articles inside a blanket, I remembered a similar bundle, surreptitiously dropped from my attic window a few years earlier. I wondered if this were to be another ill-starred flight toward the Himalayas. The first time my spiritual elation had been high; tonight my conscience smote me at the thought of leaving my guru.

The following morning I sought out Behari Pundit, my

Sanskrit professor at Scottish Church College.

"Sir, you have told me of your friendship with a great disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya. Please give me his address."

"You mean Ram Gopal Muzumdar. I call him the 'sleepless saint.' He is always awake in an ecstatic consciousness. His home is in Ranbajpur, near Tarakeswar."

I thanked the pundit and entrained immediately for Tarakeswar. I hoped to silence my misgivings by getting permission from the "sleepless saint" to engage myself in lonely meditation in the Himalayas. Behari Pundit had told me that Ram Gopal had received illumination after many years of *Kriya Yoga* practice in isolated caves in Bengal.

In Tarakeswar I made my way to a famous shrine. Hindus regard it with veneration, such as Catholics feel for the Lourdes sanctuary in France. Innumerable healing miracles have occurred in Tarakeswar, including one for a member of my family.

"I sat in the temple there for a week," my eldest aunt once told me. "Observing a complete fast, I prayed for the recovery of your Uncle Sarada from a chronic malady. On the seventh day I found an herb materialized in my hand! I made a brew from the leaves and gave it to your uncle. His disease vanished at once and has never reappeared."

I entered the sacred Tarakeswar shrine; the altar contains nothing but a round stone. Its circumference, beginningless and endless, makes it aptly significant of the Infinite. In India cosmic abstractions are understood even by the unlettered peasant; in fact, Westerners have sometimes accused him of living on abstractions!

My own mood at the moment was so austere that I felt disinclined to bow before the stone symbol. God should be sought, I reflected, only within the soul.

I left the temple without genuflection and walked briskly toward the outlying village of Ranbajpur. I was not sure of the way. My appeal to a passer-by for information caused him to sink into long cogitation.

"When you come to a crossroad, turn right and keep going," he finally pronounced oracularly.

Obedying the directions, I wended my way alongside the banks

of a canal. Darkness fell; the outskirts of the jungle village were alive with winking fireflies and the howls of nearby jackals. The moonlight was too faint to be helpful; I stumbled on for two hours.

Welcome clang of a cowbell! My repeated shouts eventually brought a peasant to my side.

"I am looking for Ram Gopal Babu."

"No such person lives in our village." The man's tone was surly. "You are probably a lying detective."

Hoping to allay suspicion in his politically troubled mind, I touchingly explained my predicament. He took me to his home and offered a hospitable welcome.

"Ranbajpur is far from here," he remarked. "At the crossroad, you should have turned left, not right."

My earlier informant, I thought sadly, was a definite menace to travellers. After a relishable meal of coarse rice, lentil-*dal*, and curry of potatoes with raw bananas, I retired to a small hut adjoining the courtyard. In the distance, villagers were singing to the loud accompaniment of *mridangas** and cymbals. Sleep was inconsiderable that night; I prayed deeply to be directed to the secluded yogi, Ram Gopal.

As the first streaks of dawn penetrated the fissures of my hut, I set out for Ranbajpur. Crossing rough paddy fields, I trudged over sickled stumps of the prickly plant and around mounds of dried clay. An occasionally met peasant would inform me, invariably, that my destination was "only a *krosha*" (two miles). In six hours the sun travelled victoriously from horizon to meridian, but I began to feel that I would ever be distant from Ranbajpur by one *krosha*.

At midafternoon my world was still an endless paddy field. Heat pouring from the inescapable sky was bringing me to near-collapse. I saw a man approaching me at a leisurely pace. I hardly dared utter my usual question, lest it summon the monotonous: "Just a *krosha*."

* Hand-played drums, commonly used to accompany devotional chanting (kirtan) during religious ceremonies and processions.

The stranger halted beside me. Short and slight, he was physically unimpressive save for an extraordinary pair of piercing dark eyes.

"I was planning to leave Ranbajpur, but your purpose was good, so I awaited you." He shook his finger in my astounded face. "Aren't you clever to think that, unannounced, you could pounce on me? That professor Behari had no right to give you my address."

Considering that introduction of myself would be mere verbosity in the presence of this master, I stood speechless, somewhat hurt at my reception. His next remark was abruptly put.

"Tell me, where do you think God is?"

"Why, He is within me and everywhere." I doubtless looked as bewildered as I felt.

"All-pervading, eh?" The saint chuckled. "Then why, young sir, did you fail to bow before the Infinite in the stone symbol at the Tarakeswar temple yesterday?* Your pride caused you the punishment of being misdirected by the passer-by who was not bothered by fine distinctions between left and right. Today, too, you have had a fairly uncomfortable time of it!"

I agreed wholeheartedly, wonder-struck that an omnipresent eye hid within the unremarkable body before me. Healing strength emanated from the yogi; I was instantly refreshed in the scorching field.

"The devotee inclines to think his path to God is the only way," he said. "Yoga, through which divinity is found within, is doubtless the highest road, as Lahiri Mahasaya has told us. But, discovering the Lord within, we soon perceive Him without. Holy shrines in Tarakeswar and elsewhere are rightly venerated as nuclear centres of spiritual power."

The saint's censorious attitude vanished; his eyes became compassionately soft. He patted my shoulder.

"Young yogi, I see you are running away from your master. He has everything you need; you should return to him." He added,

* "A man who bows down to nothing can never bear the burden of himself."

—Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed*.

"Mountains cannot be your guru"—the same thought that Sri Yukteswar had expressed two days earlier.

"Masters are under no cosmic compulsion to live on mountains only." My companion glanced at me quizzically. "The Himalayas in India and Tibet have no monopoly on saints. What one does not trouble to find within will not be discovered by transporting the body hither and yon. As soon as the devotee is *willing* to go even to the ends of the earth for spiritual enlightenment, his guru appears nearby."

I silently agreed, recalling my prayer in the Banaras hermitage, followed by the meeting with Sri Yukteswar in a crowded lane.

"Are you able to have a little room where you can close the door and be alone?"

"Yes." I reflected that this saint descended from the general to the particular with disconcerting speed.

"That is your cave." The yogi bestowed on me a gaze of illumination which I have never forgotten. "That is your sacred mountain. That is where you will find the kingdom of God."

His simple words instantaneously banished my lifelong obsession for the Himalayas. In a burning paddy field I awoke from the dream of mountains and eternal snows.

"Young sir, your divine thirst is laudable. I feel great love for you." Ram Gopal took my hand and led me to a quaint hamlet within a jungle clearing. The adobe houses were covered with coconut leaves and rustically adorned over their entrances with fresh tropical flowers.

The saint seated me on the umbrageous bamboo platform of his small cottage. After he had given me sweetened lime juice and a piece of rock candy, we entered his patio and assumed the lotus posture. Four hours of meditation passed. I opened my eyes and saw that the moonlit figure of the yogi was still motionless. As I was sternly reminding my stomach that man does not live by bread alone, Ram Gopal rose from his seat.

"I see you are famished," he said. "Food will be ready soon."

He kindled a fire under a clay oven on the patio. In a short time we were eating rice and *dal*, served on large banana-tree leaves. My host had courteously refused my aid in all cooking chores. "The

guest is God," a Hindu proverb, has commanded devout observance in India since time immemorial. In my later world travels, I was charmed to see that a similar respect for visitors is manifested in the rural sections of many countries. The city dweller finds the keen edge of hospitality blunted by a superabundance of strange faces.

The marts of men seemed almost unimaginably remote as I squatted by the yogi in the isolation of the tiny jungle village. The cottage room was mysteriously lit with a mellow glow. Ram Gopal arranged some torn blankets on the floor for my bed, and seated himself on a straw mat. Overwhelmed by his spiritual magnetism, I ventured a request.

"Sir, why don't you grant me a *samadhi*?"

"Dear one, I would be glad to convey the divine contact, but it is not my place to do so." The saint looked at me with half closed eyes. "Your master will bestow that experience on you shortly. Your body is not tuned just yet. As a small lamp-bulb would be shattered by excessive electrical voltage, so your nerves are unready for the cosmic current. If I gave you the infinite ecstasy right now, you would burn as though every cell were on fire.

"You are asking illumination from me," the yogi continued musingly, "while I am wondering—inconsiderable as I am, and with the little meditation I have done—if I have succeeded in pleasing God, and what worth I may find in His eyes at the final reckoning."

"Sir, have you not been singleheartedly seeking God for a long time?"

"I have not done much. Behari must have told you something of my life. For twenty years I occupied a secret grotto, meditating eighteen hours a day. Then I moved to a more inaccessible cave and stayed there for twenty-five years, remaining in yoga union for twenty hours daily. I did not need sleep, for I was ever with God. My body was more rested by the complete calmness of super-consciousness than it could have been by the imperfect peace of the ordinary subconscious state.

"The muscles relax during sleep; but the heart, lungs, and circulatory system are constantly at work; they get no rest. In

superconsciousness, all internal organs remain in a state of suspended animation, electrified by the cosmic energy. By such means I have found it unnecessary to sleep for years." He added, "The time will come when you, too, will dispense with sleep."

"My goodness, you have meditated for so long and yet are unsure of the Lord's favour!" I remarked with astonishment. "Then what about us poor mortals?"

"Well, don't you see, my dear boy, that God is Eternity Itself? To assume that one may fully know Him by forty-five years of meditation is rather a preposterous expectation. Babaji assures us, however, that even a little meditation saves us from the dire fear of death and of after-death states. Do not fix your spiritual ideal on small mountains, but hitch it to the star of unqualified divine attainment. If you work hard, you will get there."

Enthralled by the prospect, I asked him for further enlightening words. He related a wondrous story of his first meeting with Lahiri Mahasaya's guru, Babaji.* Around midnight Ram Gopal fell into silence, and I lay down on my blankets. Closing my eyes, I saw flashes of lightning; the vast space within me was a chamber of molten light. I opened my eyes and observed the same dazzling radiance. The room became a part of the infinite vault that I was beholding with interior vision.

The yogi said, "Why don't you go to sleep?"

"Sir, how can I sleep when lightning is blazing around me, whether my eyes are shut or open?"

"You are blessed to be having this experience. The spiritual radiations are not easily seen." The saint added a few words of affection.

At dawn Ram Gopal gave me rock candies and said I must depart. I felt such reluctance to bid him farewell that tears coursed down my cheeks.

"I will not let you go empty-handed." The yogi spoke tenderly. "I will do something for you."

He smiled and looked at me steadfastly. I became immobile, as

*See pages 301-304.

though rooted to the ground; vibrations of peace that emanated from the saint flooded my being. I was instantaneously healed of a pain in my back that had been troubling me intermittently for years.

Renewed, bathed in a sea of luminous joy, I wept no more. After touching Ram Gopal's feet, I entered the jungle. I made my way through its tropical tangle and over many paddy fields until I reached Tarakeswar.

There I made a second pilgrimage to the famous shrine, and prostrated myself fully before the altar. The round stone enlarged before my inner vision until it became the cosmical spheres: ring within ring, zone after zone, all dowered with divinity.

I entrained happily an hour later for Calcutta. My travels ended, not in the lofty mountains, but in the Himalayan presence of my master.

An Experience in Cosmic Consciousness

"I am here, Guruji." My shamefacedness spoke more eloquently for me.

"Let us go to the kitchen and find something to eat." Sri Yukteswar's manner was as casual as though hours and not days had separated us.

"Master, I must have disappointed you by my abrupt departure from my duties here; I thought you might be angry with me."

"No, of course not! Wrath springs only from thwarted desires. I do not expect anything from others, so their actions cannot be in opposition to wishes of mine. I would not use you for my own ends; I am happy only in your own true happiness."

"Sir, one hears of divine love in a vague way, but today I am indeed having a concrete example of it from your angelic self! In the world, even a father does not easily forgive his son if he leaves his parent's business without warning. But you show not the slightest vexation, though you must have been put to great inconvenience by the many unfinished tasks I left behind."

We looked into each other's eyes, where tears were shining. A blissful wave engulfed me; I was conscious that the Lord, in the form of my guru, was expanding the limited ardours of my heart to

vast reaches of cosmic love.

A few mornings later I made my way to Master's empty sitting room. I planned to meditate, but my laudable purpose was unshared by disobedient thoughts. They scattered like birds before the hunter.

"Mukunda!" Sri Yukteswar's voice sounded from a distant balcony.

I felt as rebellious as my thoughts. "Master always urges me to meditate," I muttered to myself. "He should not disturb me when he knows why I came to his room."

He summoned me again; I remained obstinately silent. The third time his tone held rebuke.

"Sir, I am meditating," I shouted protestingly.

"I know how you are meditating," my guru called out, "with your mind distributed like leaves in a storm! Come here to me."

Thwarted and exposed, I made my way sadly to his side.

"Poor boy, mountains cannot give you what you want." Master spoke caressingly, comfortingly. His calm gaze was unfathomable. "Your heart's desire shall be fulfilled."

Sri Yukteswar seldom indulged in riddles; I was bewildered. He struck gently on my chest above the heart.

My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical bondage and streamed out like a fluid piercing light from my every pore. The flesh was as though dead; yet in my intense awareness I knew that never before had I been fully alive. My sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body but embraced the circumambient atoms. People on distant streets seemed to be moving gently over my own remote periphery. The roots of plants and trees appeared through a dim transparency of the soil; I discerned the inward flow of their sap.

The whole vicinity lay bare before me. My ordinary frontal vision was now changed to a vast spherical sight, simultaneously all-perceptive. Through the back of my head I saw men strolling far down Rai Ghat Lane, and noticed also a white cow that was leisurely approaching. When she reached the open ashram gate, I observed her as though with my two physical eyes. After she had

passed behind the brick wall of the courtyard, I saw her clearly still.

All objects within my panoramic gaze trembled and vibrated like quick motion pictures. My body, Master's, the pillared courtyard, the furniture and floor, the trees and sunshine, occasionally became violently agitated, until all melted into a luminescent sea; even as sugar crystals, thrown into a glass of water, dissolve after being shaken. The unifying light alternated with materializations of form, the metamorphoses revealing the law of cause and effect in creation.

An oceanic joy broke upon calm endless shores of my soul. The Spirit of God, I realized, is exhaustless Bliss; His body is countless tissues of light. A swelling glory within me began to envelop towns, continents, the earth, solar and stellar systems, tenuous nebulae, and floating universes. The entire cosmos, gently luminous, like a city seen afar at night, glimmered within the infinitude of my being. The dazzling light beyond the sharply etched global outlines faded slightly at the farthest edges; there I saw a mellow radiance, ever undiminished. It was indescribably subtle; the planetary pictures were formed of a grosser light.*

The divine dispersion of rays poured from an Eternal Source, blazing into galaxies, transfigured with ineffable auras. Again and again I saw the creative beams condense into constellations, then resolve into sheets of transparent flame. By rhythmic reversion, sextillion worlds passed into diaphanous lustre, then fire became firmament.

I cognized the centre of the empyrean as a point of intuitive perception in my heart. Irradiating splendour issued from my nucleus to every part of the universal structure. Blissful *amrita*, nectar of immortality, pulsated through me with a quicksilverlike fluidity. The creative voice of God I heard resounding as *Aum*,† the vibration of the Cosmic Motor.

Suddenly the breath returned to my lungs. With a disappointment almost unbearable, I realized that my infinite immensity was

* Light as the essence of creation is explained in chapter 30.

† "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."—*John* 1:1 (Bible).

Autobiography of a Yogi

lost. Once more I was limited to the humiliating cage of a body, not easily accommodative to the Spirit. Like a prodigal child, I had run away from my macrocosmic home and had imprisoned myself in a narrow microcosm.

My guru was standing motionless before me; I started to prostrate myself at his holy feet in gratitude for his having bestowed on me the experience in cosmic consciousness that I had long passionately sought. He held me upright and said quietly:

"You must not get overdrunk with ecstasy. Much work yet remains for you in the world. Come, let us sweep the balcony floor; then we shall walk by the Ganges."

I fetched a broom; Master, I knew, was teaching me the secret of balanced living. The soul must stretch over the cosmogonic abysses, while the body performs its daily duties.

When Sri Yukteswar and I set out later for a stroll, I was still entranced in unspeakable rapture. I saw our bodies as two astral pictures, moving over a road by the river whose essence was sheer light.

"It is the Spirit of God that actively sustains every form and force in the universe; yet He is transcendental and aloof in the blissful uncreated void beyond the worlds of vibratory phenomena,"* Master

* "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."—*John* 5:22 (Bible). "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."—*John* 1:18 (Bible). "God ... created all things by Jesus Christ."—*Ephesians* 3:9 (Bible). "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."—*John* 14:12 (Bible). "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you."—*John* 14:26 (Bible).

These Biblical words refer to the threefold nature of God as Father, Son, Holy Ghost (*Sat, Tat, Aum* in the Hindu scriptures). God the Father is the Absolute, Unmanifested, existing *beyond* vibratory creation. God the Son is the Christ Consciousness (Brahma or *Kutastha Chaitanya*) existing *within* vibratory creation; this Christ Consciousness is the "only begotten" or sole reflection of the Uncreated Infinite. The outward manifestation of the omnipresent Christ Consciousness, its "witness" *Revelation* 3:14 (Bible), is *Aum*, the Word or Holy Ghost: invisible divine power, the only doer, the sole causative and activating force that upholds all creation through vibration. *Aum* the blissful Comforter is heard in meditation and reveals to the devotee the ultimate Truth, bringing "all things to ... remembrance."

explained. "Those who attain Self-realization on earth live a similar twofold existence. Conscientiously performing their work in the world, they are yet immersed in an inward beatitude.

"The Lord has created all men from the illimitable joy of His being. Though they are painfully cramped by the body, God nevertheless expects that men made in His image shall ultimately rise above all sense identifications and reunite with Him."

The cosmic vision left many permanent lessons. By daily stilling my thoughts, I could win release from the delusive conviction that my body was a mass of flesh and bones, traversing the hard soil of matter. The breath and the restless mind, I saw, are like storms that lash the ocean of light into waves of material forms—earth, sky, human beings, animals, birds, trees. No perception of the Infinite as One Light can be had except by calming those storms.

As often as I quieted the two natural tumults, I beheld the multitudinous waves of creation melt into one lucent sea; even as the waves of the ocean, when a tempest subsides, serenely dissolve into unity.

A master bestows the divine experience of cosmic consciousness when his disciple, by meditation, has strengthened his mind to a degree where the vast vistas would not overwhelm him. Mere intellectual willingness or open-mindedness is not enough. Only adequate enlargement of consciousness by yoga practice and devotional *bhakti* can prepare one to absorb the liberating shock of omnipresence.

The divine experience comes with a natural inevitability to the sincere devotee. His intense craving begins to pull at God with an irresistible force. The Lord as the Cosmic Vision is drawn by that magnetic ardour into the seeker's range of consciousness.

I wrote, in my later years, the following poem, "Samadhi," endeavouring to convey a glimpse of its glory:

Vanished the veils of light and shade,
Lifted every vapour of sorrow,
Sailed away all dawns of fleeting joy,
Gone the dim sensory mirage.
Love, hate, health, disease, life, death:
Perished these false shadows on the screen of duality.

Autobiography of a Yogi

The storm of *maya* stilled
 By magic wand of intuition deep.
 Present, past, future, no more for me,
 But ever-present, all-flowing I, I, everywhere.
 Planets, stars, stardust, earth,
 Volcanic bursts of doomsday cataclysms,
 Creation's moulding furnace,
 Glaciers of silent X-rays, burning electron floods,
 Thoughts of all men, past, present, to come,
 Every blade of grass, myself, mankind,
 Each particle of universal dust,
 Anger, greed, good, bad, salvation, lust,
 I swallowed, transmuted all
 Into a vast ocean of blood of my own one Being.
 Smouldering joy, oft-puffed by meditation
 Blinding my tearful eyes,
 Burst into immortal flames of bliss,
 Consumed my tears, my frame, my all.
 Thou art I, I am Thou,
 Knowing, Knower, Known, as One!
 Tranquilled, unbroken thrill, eternally living, ever-new peace.
 Enjoyable beyond imagination of expectancy, *samadhi* bliss!
 Not an unconscious state
 Or mental chloroform without wilful return,
Samadhi but extends my conscious realm
 Beyond limits of the mortal frame
 To farthest boundary of eternity
 Where I, the Cosmic Sea,
 Watch the little ego floating in Me.
 Mobile murmurs of atoms are heard,
 The dark earth, mountains, vales, lo! molten liquid!
 Flowing seas change into vapours of nebulae!
Aum blows upon vapours, opening wondrously their veils,
 Oceans stand revealed, shining electrons,
 Till, at the last sound of the cosmic drum,*
 Vanish the grosser lights into eternal rays
 Of all-pervading bliss.

* *Aum*, the creative vibration that externalizes all creation.

An Experience in Cosmic Consciousness

From joy I came, for joy I live, in sacred joy I melt.

Ocean of mind, I drink all creation's waves.

Four veils of solid, liquid, vapour, light,

Lift aright.

I, in everything, enter the Great Myself.

Gone forever: fitful, flickering shadows of mortal memory;

Spotless is my mental sky—below, ahead, and high above;

Eternity and I, one united ray.

A tiny bubble of laughter, I

Am become the Sea of Mirth Itself.

Sri Yukteswar taught me how to summon the blessed experience at will, and how to transmit it to others* when their intuitive channels are developed.

For months, after the first time, I entered the state of ecstatic union, comprehending daily why the *Upanishads* say that God is *rasa*, "the most relishable." One morning, however, I took a problem to Master.

"I want to know, sir—when shall I find God?"

"You have found Him."

"Oh, no, sir, I don't think so!"

My guru was smiling. "I am sure you aren't expecting a venerable Personage, adorning a throne in some antiseptic corner of the cosmos! I see, however, that you are imagining that possession of miraculous powers is proof that one has found God. No. One might gain the power to control the whole universe—yet find the Lord elusive still. Spiritual advancement is not to be measured by one's displays of outward powers, but solely by the depth of his bliss in meditation.

"*Ever-new Joy is God*. He is inexhaustible; as you continue your meditations during the years, He will beguile you with an infinite ingenuity. Devotees like yourself who have found the way to God never dream of exchanging Him for any other happiness; He is seductive beyond thought of competition.

"How quickly we weary of earthly pleasures! Desire for

* I have transmitted the Cosmic Vision to a number of *Kriya Yogis* in East and West. One of them, Mr. James J. Lynn, is shown in *samadhi* in a picture in this book.

Autobiography of a Yogi

material things is endless; man is never satisfied completely, and pursues one goal after another. The 'something else' he seeks is the Lord, who alone can grant lasting joy.

"Outward longings drive us from the Eden within; they offer false pleasures that only impersonate soul happiness. The lost paradise is quickly regained through divine meditation. As God is unanticipatory Ever-Newness, we never tire of Him. Can we be surfeited with bliss, delightfully varied throughout eternity?"

"I understand now, sir, why saints call the Lord unfathomable. Even everlasting life could not suffice to appraise Him."

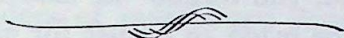
"That is true; but He is also near and dear. After the mind has been cleared by *Kriya Yoga* of sensory obstacles, meditation furnishes a twofold proof of God. Ever-new joy is evidence of His existence, convincing to our very atoms. Also, in meditation one finds His instant guidance, His adequate response to every difficulty."

"I see, Guruji; you have solved my problem." I smiled gratefully. "I do realize now that I have found God, for whenever the joy of meditation has returned subconsciously during my active hours, I have been subtly directed to adopt the right course in everything, even in minor details."

"Human life is beset with sorrow until we know how to tune in with the Divine Will, whose 'right course' is often baffling to the egoistic intelligence," Master said.

"God alone gives unerring counsel; who but He bears the burden of the cosmos?"

The Cauliflower Robbery



"Master, a gift for you! These six huge cauliflowers were planted with my hands; I have watched over their growth with the tender care of a mother nursing her child." I presented the basket of vegetables with a ceremonial flourish.

"Thank you!" Sri Yukteswar's smile was warm with appreciation. "Please keep them in your room; I shall need them tomorrow for a special dinner."

I had just arrived in Puri to spend my college summer vacation with my guru at his seaside hermitage. Built by Master and his disciples, the cheerful little two-storied retreat fronts on the Bay of Bengal.

I awoke early the following morning, refreshed by the salty sea breezes and the quiet charm of the ashram. My guru's melodious voice was calling; I took a look at my cherished cauliflowers and stowed them neatly under my bed.

"Come, let us go to the beach." Master led the way; several young disciples and I followed in a scattered group. Our guru surveyed us in mild criticism.

"When our Western brothers walk, they usually take pride in unison. Now, please march in two rows; keep rhythmic step with one another." Sri Yukteswar watched as we obeyed; he began to sing: "Boys go to and fro, in a pretty little row." I could not but admire the ease with which Master was able to match the brisk

pace of his young students.

"Halt!" My guru's eyes sought mine. "Did you remember to lock the back door of the hermitage?"

"I think so, sir."

Sri Yukteswar was silent for a few minutes, a half suppressed smile on his lips. "No, you forgot," he said finally. "Divine contemplation must not be made an excuse for material carelessness. You have neglected your duty in safeguarding the ashram; you must be punished."

I thought he was obscurely joking when he added: "Your six cauliflowers will soon be only five."

We turned around at Master's orders and marched back until we were close to the hermitage.

"Rest awhile. Mukunda, look across the compound on our left; observe the road beyond. A certain man will arrive there presently; he will be the means of your chastisement."

I concealed my vexation at these incomprehensible remarks. A peasant soon appeared on the road; he was dancing grotesquely and flinging his arms about with meaningless gestures. Almost paralyzed with curiosity, I glued my eyes on the hilarious spectacle. As the man reached a point in the road where he would vanish from our view, Sri Yukteswar said, "Now, he will return."

The peasant at once changed his direction and made for the rear of the ashram. Crossing a sandy tract, he entered the building by the back door. I had left it unlocked, even as my guru had said. The man emerged shortly, holding one of my prized cauliflowers. He now strode along respectably, invested with the dignity of possession.

The unfolding farce, in which my role appeared to be that of bewildered victim, was not so disconcerting that I failed in indignant pursuit of the thief. I was halfway to the road when Master called me back. He was shaking from head to foot with laughter.

"That poor crazy man has been longing for a cauliflower," he explained between outbursts of mirth. "I thought it would be a good idea if he got one of yours, so ill-guarded!"

I dashed to my room, where I found that the thief, evidently one with a vegetable fixation, had left untouched my gold rings, watch, and money, all lying openly on the blanket. He had crawled instead

under the bed, where the basket of cauliflowers, completely hidden from casual sight, had yielded the object of his singlehearted desire.

I asked Sri Yukteswar that evening to explain the incident (which had, I thought, a few baffling features).

My guru shook his head slowly. "You will understand it some-day. Science will soon discover a number of these hidden laws."

When the wonders of radio burst some years later on an astounded world, I remembered Master's prediction. Age-old concepts of time and space were annihilated; no person's home so narrow that London or Calcutta could not enter! The dullest intelligence enlarged before indisputable proof of one aspect of man's omnipresence.

The "plot" of the cauliflower comedy may be best understood by a radio analogy.* My guru was a perfect human radio. Thoughts are no more than very subtle vibrations moving in the ether. Just as a correctly tuned radio picks up a desired musical number out of thousands of other programmes from every direction, so Sri Yukteswar had been sensitively receptive to a certain pertinent thought (that of the half-witted man who was hankering for a cauliflower), out of the countless thoughts of broadcasting human minds in the world. During the walk toward the beach, no sooner had Master become

* A radio microscope devised in 1939 revealed a new world of hitherto unknown rays. "Man himself as well as all kinds of supposedly inert matter constantly emits the rays that this instrument 'sees,'" reported the *Associated Press*. "Those who believe in telepathy, second sight, and clairvoyance, have in this announcement the first scientific proof of the existence of invisible rays that really travel from one person to another. The radio device actually is a radio-frequency spectroscope. It does the same thing for cool, non-glowing matter that the spectroscope does when it discloses the kinds of atoms that make the stars....The existence of such rays coming from man and all living things has been suspected by scientists for many years. Today is the first experimental proof of their existence. The discovery shows that every atom and every molecule in nature is a continuous radio-broadcasting station....Thus even after death the substance that was a man continues to send out its delicate rays. The wavelengths of these rays range from shorter than anything now used in broadcasting to the longest kind of radio waves. The jumble of these waves is almost inconceivable. There are millions of them. A single very large molecule may give off 1,000,000 different wavelengths at the same time. The longer wavelengths of this sort travel with the ease and speed of radio waves....There is one amazing difference between the new radio-rays and familiar rays like light. This is the prolonged time, amounting to thousands of years, that these radio waves will keep on emitting from undisturbed matter."

aware of the peasant's simple yearning than he was willing to gratify it. Sri Yukteswar's divine eye had discovered the man, dancing down the road, before he had become visible to the disciples. My forgetfulness about locking the ashram door had given Master a convenient excuse to deprive me of one of my valued vegetables.

After thus functioning as a receiving instrument, Sri Yukteswar then operated, through his powerful will, as a broadcaster or sending instrument.* In that role he had successfully directed the peasant to reverse his steps and go to a certain room for a single cauliflower.

Intuition is soul guidance, appearing naturally in man during those instants when his mind is calm. Nearly everyone has had the experience of an inexplicably correct "hunch" or has transferred his thoughts accurately to another person.

The human mind, freed from the disturbances or "static" of restlessness, is empowered to perform all the functions of complicated radio mechanisms—sending as well as receiving thoughts and tuning out undesirable ones. As the power of a radio-broadcasting station is regulated by the amount of electrical current it can utilize, so the effectiveness of a human radio depends on the degree of will power possessed by each person.

All thoughts vibrate eternally in the cosmos. By deep concentration a master is able to detect the thoughts of any man, living or dead. Thoughts are universally and not individually rooted; a truth cannot be created, but only perceived. Any erroneous thought of man is a result of an imperfection, large or small, in his discernment. The goal of yoga science is to calm the mind, that without distortion it may hear the infallible counsel of the Inner Voice.

Radio and television have brought the instantaneous sound and sight of remote persons to the firesides of millions: the first faint scientific intimations that man is an all-pervading spirit. Though the ego in most barbaric ways conspires to enslave him, man is not a body confined to a point in space but is essentially the omnipresent soul.

* See footnote on page 256.

"Very strange, very wonderful, seemingly very improbable phenomena may yet appear which, when once established, will not astonish us more than we are now astonished at all that science has taught us during the last century," Charles Robert Richet,* Nobel laureate in physiology, has declared. "It is assumed that the phenomena which we now accept without surprise do not excite our astonishment because they are understood. But this is not the case. If they do not surprise us, it is not because they are understood, it is because they are familiar; for if that which is not understood ought to surprise us, we should be surprised at everything—the fall of a stone thrown into the air, the acorn which becomes an oak, mercury which expands when it is heated, iron attracted by a magnet.

"The science of today is a light matter...Those amazing truths that our descendants will discover are even now all around us, staring us in the eyes, so to speak; and yet we do not see them. But it is not enough to say that we do not see them; we do not wish to see them—for as soon as an unexpected and unfamiliar fact appears, we try to fit it into the framework of the commonplaces of accepted knowledge, and are indignant that anyone should dare to experiment further."

A humorous occurrence took place a few days after I had been so implausibly robbed of a cauliflower. A certain kerosene lamp could not be found. Having so lately witnessed my guru's omniscient insight, I thought he would demonstrate that it was child's play to find the lamp.

Master perceived my expectation. With exaggerated gravity he questioned all ashram residents. A young disciple confessed that he had used the lamp to go to the well in the back yard.

Sri Yukteswar gave the solemn counsel: "Seek the lamp near the well."

I rushed there; no lamp! Crestfallen, I returned to my guru. He was now laughing heartily, without compunction for my disillusionment.

"Too bad I couldn't direct you to the vanished lamp; I am not a fortune-teller!" With twinkling eyes, he added, "I am not even a

* Author of *Our Sixth Sense* (London: Rider & Co.).

satisfactory Sherlock Holmes!"

I realized that Master would never display his powers when challenged, or for a triviality.

Delightful weeks sped by. Sri Yukteswar was planning a religious procession. He asked me to lead the disciples across the town and beach of Puri. The festive day (the summer solstice) dawned in intense heat.

"Guruji, how can I take the barefooted students over the fiery sands?" I asked despairingly.

"I will tell you a secret," Master said. "The Lord shall send an umbrella of clouds; you all shall walk in comfort."

I happily organized the procession; our group started from the ashram with a Satsanga* banner. Designed by Sri Yukteswar, it bore the symbol of the single† eye, the telescopic gaze of intuition.

No sooner had we left the hermitage than the sky became filled with clouds as though by magic. To the accompaniment of astonished ejaculations from all observers, a light shower fell, cooling the city streets and the scorching seashore.

The soothing drops descended during the two hours of the parade. The exact instant at which our group returned to the ashram, the clouds and rain disappeared.

"You see how God feels for us," Master replied after I had expressed my gratitude. "The Lord responds to all and works for all. Just as He sent rain at my plea, so He fulfills any sincere desire of the devotee. Seldom do men realize how often God heeds their prayers. He is not partial to a few, but listens to everyone who approaches Him trustfully. His children should ever have implicit faith in the loving-kindness of their Omnipresent Father."‡

* *Sat* is literally "being," hence "essence, truth, reality"; *sanga* is "association." Sri Yukteswar called his hermitage organization *Satsanga*, "fellowship with truth."

† "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." —*Matthew* 6:22 (Bible). During deep meditation, the single or spiritual eye becomes visible within the central part of the forehead. This omniscient eye is variously referred to in scriptures as the third eye, star of the East, inner eye, dove descending from heaven, eye of Shiva, eye of intuition, and so on.

‡ "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" —*Psalms* 94:9–10 (Bible).

Sri Yukteswar sponsored four yearly festivals, at the equinoxes and solstices, when his students gathered from far and near. The winter solstice celebration was held in Serampore; the first one I attended left me with a permanent blessing.

The festivities started in the morning with a barefoot procession along the streets. The voices of a hundred students rang out with sweet religious songs; a few musicians played the flute and *khol kartal* (drums and cymbals). Enthusiastic townspeople strewed the path with flowers, glad to be summoned from prosaic tasks by our resounding praise of the Lord's blessed name. The long tour ended in the courtyard of the hermitage. There we encircled our guru, while students on upper balconies showered us with marigold blossoms.

Many guests went upstairs to receive a pudding of *channa* and oranges. I made my way to a group of brother disciples who were serving today as cooks. Food for such large gatherings had to be cooked outdoors in huge cauldrons. The improvised wood-burning brick stoves were smoky and tear-provoking, but we laughed merrily at our work. Religious festivals in India are never considered troublesome; each devotee gladly does his part, supplying money, or rice and vegetables, or his personal services.

Master was soon in our midst, supervising the details of the feast. Busy every moment, he kept pace with the most energetic young student.

A *sankirtan* (group chanting), accompanied by the harmonium and hand-beaten Indian drums, was in progress on the second-storey. Sri Yukteswar listened appreciatively; his musical sense was acutely perfect.

"They are off key!" Master left the cooks and joined the musicians. The melody was heard again, this time correctly rendered.

The Sama Veda contains the world's earliest writings on musical science. In India, music, painting, and the drama are considered divine arts. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, the Eternal Trinity, were the first musicians. Shiva in His aspect of Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer, is scripturally represented as having worked out the infinite modes of rhythm in the processes of universal creation, preservation, and destruction, while Brahma and Vishnu accentuated the time beat: Brahma clanging the cymbals and

Vishnu sounding the *mridāṅga* or holy drum.

Saraswati, goddess of wisdom, is symbolized as performing on the *vina*, mother of all stringed instruments. Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, is shown in Hindu art with a flute; on it he plays the enrapturing song that recalls to their true home the human souls wandering in *maya*-delusion.

The foundation stones of Hindu music are *ragas* or fixed melodic scales. The six basic *ragas* branch out into 126 derivative *raginis* (wives) and *putras* (sons). Each *raga* has a minimum of five notes: a leading note (*vādi* or king), a secondary note (*samavādi* or prime minister), helping notes (*anuvādi*, attendants), and a dissonant note (*vivādi*, the enemy).

Each of the six basic *ragas* has a natural correspondence with a certain hour of the day, season of the year, and a presiding deity who bestows a particular potency. Thus, (1) the *Hindole Raga* is heard only at dawn in the spring, to evoke the mood of universal love; (2) *Deepaka Raga* is played during the evening in summer, to arouse compassion; (3) *Megha Raga* is a melody for midday in the rainy season, to summon courage; (4) *Bhairava Raga* is played in the mornings of August, September, October, to achieve tranquillity; (5) *Sri Raga* is reserved for autumn twilights, to attain pure love; (6) *Malkounsa Raga* is heard at midnights in winter, for valour.

The ancient rishis discovered these laws of sound alliance between nature and man. Because nature is an objectification of *Aum*, the Primal Sound or Vibratory Word, man can obtain control over all natural manifestations through the use of certain *mantras* or chants.* Historical documents tell of the remarkable powers possessed by

* Folklore of all peoples contains references to incantations with power over Nature. The American Indians developed effective sound rituals for rain and wind. Tan Sen, the great Hindu musician, was able to quench fire by the power of his song.

Charles Kellogg, the California naturalist, gave a demonstration of the effect of tonal vibration on fire in 1926 before a group of New York firemen. "Passing a bow, like an enlarged violin bow, swiftly across an aluminum tuning fork, he produced a screech like intense radio static. Instantly the yellow gas flame, two feet high, leaping inside a hollow glass tube, subsided to a height of six inches and became a sputtering blue flare. Another attempt with the bow, and another screech of vibration, extinguished it."

The Cauliflower Robbery

Miyan Tan Sen, sixteenth-century court musician for Akbar the Great. Commanded by the Emperor to sing a night *raga* while the sun was overhead, Tan Sen intoned a *mantra* that instantly caused the whole palace precincts to become enveloped in darkness.

Indian music divides the octave into twenty-two *srutis* or demi-semitones. These microtonal intervals permit fine shades of musical expression unattainable by the Western chromatic scale of twelve semitones. Each of the seven basic notes of the octave is associated in Hindu mythology with a colour, and the natural cry of a bird or beast—*Do* with green, and the peacock; *Re* with red, and the skylark; *Mi* with gold, and the goat; *Fa* with yellowish white, and the heron; *Sol* with black, and the nightingale; *La* with yellow, and the horse; *Si* with a combination of all colours, and the elephant.

Indian music outlines seventy-two *thatas* or scales. A musician has creative scope for endless improvisation around the fixed traditional melody or *raga*; he concentrates on the sentiment or definitive mood of the structural theme and embroiders it to the limits of his own originality. The Hindu musician does not read set notes; at each playing he clothes anew the bare skeleton of the *raga*, often confining himself to a single melodic sequence, stressing by repetition all its subtle microtonal and rhythmic variations.

Bach, among Western composers, understood the charm and power of repetitious sound slightly differentiated in a hundred complex ways.

Sanskrit literature describes 120 *talas* or time measures. The traditional founder of Hindu music, Bharata, is said to have isolated thirty-two kinds of *tala* in the song of a lark. The origin of *tala* or rhythm is rooted in human movements—the double time of walking, and the triple time of respiration in sleep, when inhalation is twice the length of exhalation.

India has long recognized the human voice as the most perfect instrument of sound. Hindu music therefore largely confines itself to the voice range of three octaves. For the same reason, melody (relation of successive notes) is stressed, rather than harmony (relation of simultaneous notes).

Hindu music is a subjective, spiritual, and individualistic art, aiming not at symphonic brilliance but at personal harmony with

the Over-Soul. All the celebrated songs of India have been composed by devotees of the Divine. The Sanskrit word for "musician" is *bhagavathar*, "he who sings the praises of God."

The *sankirtans* or musical gatherings are an effective form of yoga or spiritual discipline, necessitating intense concentration, absorption in the seed thought and sound. Because man himself is an expression of the Creative Word, sound exercises on him a potent and immediate effect. Great religious music of East and West bestows joy on man because it causes a temporary vibratory awakening of one of his occult spinal centres.* In those blissful moments a dim memory comes to him of his divine origin.

The *sankirtan* issuing from Sri Yukteswar's second-storey sitting room on the day of the festival was inspiring to the cooks amid the steaming pots. My brother disciples and I joyously sang the refrains, beating time with our hands.

By sunset we had served our hundreds of visitors with *khichuri* (rice and lentils), vegetable curry, and rice pudding. We laid cotton blankets over the courtyard; soon the assemblage was squatting

* Awakening of the occult cerebrospinal centres (*chakras*, astral lotuses) is the sacred goal of the yogi. Western exegetes have not understood that the New Testament chapter of Revelation contains the symbolic exposition of a yogic science, taught to John and other close disciples by Lord Jesus. John mentions (*Revelation* 1:20, Bible) the "mystery of the seven stars" and the "seven churches"; these symbols refer to the seven lotuses of light, described in yoga treatises as the seven "trap doors" in the cerebrospinal axis. Through these divinely planned "exits," the yogi, by scientific meditation, escapes from the bodily prison and resumes his true identity as Spirit. (See chapter 26.)

The seventh centre, the "thousand-petalled lotus" in the brain, is the throne of the Infinite Consciousness. In the state of divine illumination the yogi is said to perceive Brahma or God the Creator as Padmaja, "the One born of the lotus."

The "lotus posture" is so called because in that traditional pose the yogi views the varicoloured lotuses (*padmas*) of the cerebrospinal centres. Each lotus possesses a characteristic number of petals or rays composed of *prana* (life force). The *padmas* are also known as *chakras* or wheels.

The lotus posture (*padmasana*) holds the spine upright and locks the body securely against the danger of falling, backward or forward, during the trance state (*sabikalpa samadhi*); it is therefore the yogi's favourite meditation posture. However, *padmasana* may present some difficulties for the beginner, and should not be attempted without the guidance of a *Hatha Yoga* expert.

under the starry vault, quietly attentive to the wisdom pouring from Sri Yukteswar's lips. His public speeches emphasized the value of *Kriya Yoga*, and a life of self-respect, calmness, determination, simple diet, and regular exercise.

A group of very young disciples then chanted a few sacred hymns; the meeting concluded with fervent *sankirtan*. From ten o'clock until midnight, ashram residents washed pots and pans and cleared the courtyard. My guru called me to his side.

"I am pleased over your cheerful labours today and during the past week of preparations. I want you with me; you may sleep in my bed tonight."

This was a privilege I had never thought would fall to my lot. We sat a while in a state of intense divine tranquillity. About ten minutes after we had lain down to sleep, Master rose and began to dress.

"What is the matter, sir?" The joy of sleeping beside my guru was suddenly tinged with unreality.

"I think that a few students who missed their proper train connections will be here soon. Let us have some food ready."

"Guruji, no one would come at one o'clock in the morning!"

"Stay in bed; you have been working very hard. But I am going to cook."

At Sri Yukteswar's resolute tone, I jumped up and followed him to the small daily used kitchen adjacent to the second-floor inner balcony. Rice and *dal* were soon boiling.

My guru smiled affectionately. "Tonight you have conquered fatigue and fear of hard work; you shall never be bothered by them in the future."

As he uttered these words of lifelong blessing, footsteps sounded in the courtyard. I ran downstairs and admitted a group of students.

"Dear brother," one man said, "how reluctant we are to disturb Master at this hour! We made a mistake about train schedules, but felt we could not return home without a glimpse of our guru."

"He has been expecting you and is even now preparing your food."

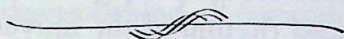
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Sri Yukteswar's welcoming voice rang out; I led the astonished visitors to the kitchen. Master turned to me with twinkling eyes.

"Now that you have finished comparing notes, no doubt you are satisfied that our guests really did miss their train!"

I followed him to his bedroom a half hour later, anticipating happily the honour of sleeping beside a godlike guru.

Outwitting the Stars



"Mukunda, why don't you get an astrological armlet?"

"Should I, Master? I don't believe in astrology."

"It is not a question of *belief*; the scientific attitude one should take on any subject is whether it is *true*. The law of gravitation worked as efficiently before Newton as after him. The cosmos would be fairly chaotic if its laws could not operate without the sanction of human belief.

"Charlatans have brought the ancient stellar science to its present disrepute. Astrology is too vast, both mathematically* and

* From astronomical references in ancient Hindu literature, scholars have been able to ascertain the dates of the authors. The scientific knowledge of the rishis was very great; in the *Kaushitaki Brahmana* we find precise astronomical passages indicating that in 3100 B.C. the Hindus were far advanced in astronomy, which had a practical value in determining the auspicious times for astrological ceremonies. An article by Tara Mata in *East-West*, February 1934, says of the *Jyotish* or body of Vedic astronomical expositions: "It contains the scientific lore that kept India at the forefront of all ancient nations and made her the mecca of seekers after knowledge. *Brahmagupta*, one of the *Jyotish* works, is an astronomical treatise dealing with such matters as the heliocentric motion of the planetary bodies in our solar system, the obliquity of the ecliptic, the earth's spherical form, the reflected light of the moon, the earth's daily axial revolution, the presence of fixed stars in the Milky Way, the law of gravitation, and other scientific facts that did not dawn in the Western world until the time of Copernicus and Newton."

The so-called "Arabic numerals," invaluable in the development of Western mathematics, came to Europe in the ninth century, via the Arabs, from India, where that system of notation had been anciently formulated. Further light on India's vast scientific

philosophically, to be rightly grasped except by men of profound understanding. If ignoramus misread the heavens, and see there a scrawl instead of a script, that is to be expected in this imperfect world. One should not dismiss the wisdom with the 'wise.'

"All parts of creation are linked together and interchange their influences. The balanced rhythm of the universe is rooted in reciprocity," my guru continued. "Man, in his human aspect, has to combat two sets of forces—first, the tumults within his being, caused by the admixture of earth, water, fire, air, and ethereal elements; second, the outer disintegrating powers of nature. So long as man struggles with his mortality, he is affected by the myriad mutations of heaven and earth.

"Astrology is the study of man's response to planetary stimuli. The stars have no conscious benevolence or animosity; they merely send forth positive and negative radiations. Of themselves, these do not help or harm humanity, but offer a lawful channel for the outward operation of cause-effect equilibriums that each man has set into motion in the past.

"A child is born on that day and at that hour when the celestial rays are in mathematical harmony with his individual karma. His horoscope is a challenging portrait, revealing his unalterable past and its probable future results. But the natal chart can be rightly interpreted only by men of intuitive wisdom: these are few.

"The message boldly blazoned across the heavens at the moment of birth is not meant to emphasize fate—the result of past good and evil—but to arouse man's will to escape from his universal thralldom. What he has done, he can undo. None other than himself was the instigator of the causes of whatever effects are now prevalent in his life. He can overcome any limitation, because he created it by his own actions in the first place, and because he possesses spiritual resources that are not subject to planetary pressure.

"Superstitious awe of astrology makes one an automaton, slavishly dependent on mechanical guidance. The wise man defeats

heritage will be found in Sir P. C. Roy's *History of Hindu Chemistry*, in B. N. Seal's *Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*, in B. K. Sarkar's *Hindu Achievements in Exact Science* and his *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology*, and in U. C. Dutt's *Materia Medica of the Hindus*.

his planets—which is to say, his past—by transferring his allegiance from the creation to the Creator. The more he realizes his unity with Spirit, the less he can be dominated by matter. The soul is ever free; it is deathless because birthless. It cannot be regimented by stars.

"Man *is* a soul, and *has* a body. When he properly places his sense of identity, he leaves behind all compulsive patterns. So long as he remains confused in his ordinary state of spiritual amnesia, he will know the subtle fetters of environmental law.

"God is Harmony; the devotee who attunes himself will never perform any action amiss. His activities will be correctly and naturally timed to accord with astrological law. After deep prayer and meditation he is in touch with his divine consciousness; there is no greater power than that inward protection."

"Then, dear Master, why do you want me to wear an astrological bangle?" I ventured this question after a long silence; I had tried to assimilate Sri Yukteswar's noble exposition, which contained thoughts very new to me.

"It is only when a traveller has reached his goal that he is justified in discarding his maps. During the journey, he takes advantage of any convenient shortcut. The ancient rishis discovered many ways to curtail the period of man's exile in delusion. There are certain mechanical features in the law of karma that can be skillfully adjusted by the fingers of wisdom.

"All human ills arise from some transgression of universal law. The scriptures point out that man must satisfy the laws of nature, while not discrediting the divine omnipotence. He should say: 'Lord, I trust in Thee, and know Thou canst help me, but I too will do my best to undo any wrong I have done.' By a number of means—by prayer, by will power, by yoga meditation, by consultation with saints, by use of astrological bangles—the adverse effects of past wrongs can be minimized or nullified.

"Just as a house may be fitted with a copper rod to absorb the shock of lightning, so the bodily temple can be protected in certain ways.

"Electrical and magnetic radiations are ceaselessly circulating in the universe; they affect man's body for good and ill. Ages ago our rishis pondered the problem of combating the adverse effects of

subtle cosmic influences. The sages discovered that pure metals emit an astral light which is powerfully counteractive to negative pulls of the planets. Certain plant combinations were also found to be helpful. Most effective of all are faultless jewels of not less than two carats.

"The practical preventive uses of astrology have seldom been seriously studied outside of India. One little-known fact is that the proper jewels, metals, and plant preparations are valueless unless the required weight is secured and unless the remedial agent is worn next to the skin."

"Sir, of course I shall take your advice and get a bangle. I am intrigued at the thought of outwitting a planet!"

"For general purposes I counsel the use of an armlet made of gold, silver, and copper. But for a specific purpose I want you to get one of silver and lead." Sri Yukteswar added careful directions.

"Guruji, what 'specific purpose' do you mean?"

"The stars are about to take an 'unfriendly' interest in you, Mukunda. Fear not; you shall be protected. In about a month your liver will cause you much trouble. The illness is scheduled to last for six months, but your use of an astrological armlet will shorten the period to twenty-four days."

I sought out a jeweller the next day, and was soon wearing the bangle. My health was excellent; Master's prediction slipped from my mind. He left Serampore to visit Banaras. Thirty days after our conversation, I felt a sudden pain in the region of my liver. The following weeks were a nightmare of excruciating pain. Reluctant to disturb my guru, I thought I would bravely endure my trial alone.

But twenty-three days of torture weakened my resolution; I entrained for Banaras. There Sri Yukteswar greeted me with unusual warmth, but gave me no opportunity to tell him my woes in private. Many devotees visited Master that day, just for a *darshan*.^{*} Ill and neglected, I sat in a corner. It was not until after the evening meal that all guests had departed. My guru summoned me to the octagonal balcony of the house.

"You must have come about your liver disorder." Sri

^{*} The blessing that flows from the mere sight of a saint.

Yukteswar's gaze was averted; he walked to and fro, occasionally intercepting the moonlight. "Let me see, you have been ailing for twenty-four days, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Please do the stomach exercise I taught you."

"If you knew the extent of my suffering, Master, you would not ask me to exercise." Nevertheless I made a feeble attempt to obey him.

"You say you have pain; I say you have none. How can such contradictions exist?" My guru looked at me inquiringly.

I was dazed and then overcome with joyful relief. No longer could I feel the continuous torment that had kept me nearly sleepless for weeks; at Sri Yukteswar's words the agony vanished as though it had never been.

I started to kneel at his feet in gratitude, but he quickly prevented me.

"Don't be childish. Get up and enjoy the beauty of the moon over the Ganges." But Master's eyes were twinkling happily as I stood in silence beside him. I understood by his attitude that he wanted me to feel that not he, but God, had been the Healer.

I wear even now the heavy silver and lead bangle, a memento of that day—long past, ever cherished—when I found anew that I was living with a personage indeed superhuman. On later occasions, when I brought my friends to Sri Yukteswar for healing, he invariably recommended jewels or the bangle,* extolling their use as an act of astrological wisdom.

I had been prejudiced against astrology from my childhood, partly because I observed that many people are sequaciously attached to it, and partly because of a prediction made by our family astrologer: "You will marry three times, being twice a widower." I brooded over the matter, feeling like a goat awaiting sacrifice before the temple of triple matrimony.

"You may as well be resigned to your fate," my brother Ananta had remarked. "Your written horoscope has correctly stated that

* See p. 233 n.

you would fly from home toward the Himalayas during your early years, but would be forcibly returned. The forecast of your marriages is also bound to be true."

A clear intuition came to me one night that the prophecy was wholly false. I set fire to the horoscope scroll, placing the ashes in a paper bag on which I wrote: "Seeds of past karma cannot germinate if they are roasted in the fires of divine wisdom." I put the bag in a conspicuous spot; Ananta immediately read my defiant comment.

"You cannot destroy truth as easily as you have burnt this paper scroll." My brother laughed scornfully.

It is a fact that on three occasions before I reached manhood, my family tried to arrange my betrothal. Each time I refused to fall in with the plans,* knowing that my love for God was more overwhelming than any astrological persuasion from the past.

"The deeper the Self-realization of a man, the more he influences the whole universe by his subtle spiritual vibrations, and the less he himself is affected by the phenomenal flux." These words of Master's often returned inspiringly to my mind.

Occasionally I told astrologers to select my worst periods, according to planetary indications, and I would still accomplish whatever task I set myself. It is true that my success at such times has been preceded by extraordinary difficulties. But my conviction has always been justified: faith in divine protection, and right use of man's God-given will, are forces more formidable than are influences flowing from the heavens.

The starry inscription at one's birth, I came to understand, is not that man is a puppet of his past. Its message is rather a prod to pride; the very heavens seek to arouse man's determination to be free from every limitation. God created each man as a soul, dowered with individuality, hence essential to the universal structure, whether in the temporary role of pillar or parasite. His freedom is final and immediate, if he so wills; it depends not on outer but inner victories.

Sri Yukteswar discovered the mathematical application of a

* One of the girls whom my family selected as a possible bride for me afterward married my cousin, Prabhas Chandra Ghosh. (Sri Ghosh passed away on January 24, 1976 while serving as Vice-President of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India). (*Publisher's Note*)

24,000-year equinoctial cycle to our present age.* The cycle is divided into an Ascending Arc and a Descending Arc, each of 12,000 years. Within each Arc fall four *Yugas* or Ages, called *Kali*, *Dwapara*, *Treta*, and *Satya*, corresponding to the Greek ideas of Iron, Bronze, Silver, and Golden Ages.

My guru determined by various calculations that the last *Kali Yuga* or Iron Age, of the Ascending Arc, started about A.D. 500. The Iron Age, 1200 years in duration, is a span of materialism; it ended about A.D. 1700. That year ushered in *Dwapara Yuga*, a 2400-year period of electrical and atomic-energy developments: the age of telegraphy, radio, airplanes, and other space-annihilators.

The 3600-year period of *Treta Yuga* will start in A.D. 4100; the age will be marked by common knowledge of telepathic communications and other time-annihilators. During the 4800 years of *Satya Yuga*, final age in an Ascending Arc, the intelligence of man will be highly developed; he will work in harmony with the divine plan.

A Descending Arc of 12,000 years, starting with a Descending Golden Age of 4800 years, then begins for the world (in A.D. 12,500); man gradually sinks into ignorance. These cycles are the eternal rounds of *maya*, the contrasts and relativities of the phenomenal universe.† Men, one by one, escape from creation's prison of duality as they awaken to consciousness of their inseverable divine unity with the Creator.

Master enlarged my understanding not only of astrology but of

* These cycles are expounded in the first part of Sri Yukteswar's book, *The Holy Science* (Published by Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).

† The Hindu scriptures place the present world-age as occurring within the *Kali Yuga* of a much longer universal cycle than the simple 24,000-year equinoctial cycle with which Sri Yukteswar was concerned. The universal cycle of the scriptures is 4,300,560,000 years in extent, and measures out a Day of Creation. This vast figure is based on the relationship between the length of the solar year and a multiple of π (3.1416, the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle).

The life span for a whole universe, according to the ancient seers, is 314,159,000,000,000 solar years, or "One Age of Brahma."

The Hindu scriptures declare that an earth such as ours is dissolved for one of two reasons: the inhabitants as a whole become either completely good or completely evil. The world mind thus generates a power that releases the captive atoms held together as an earth.

the world's scriptures. Placing the holy texts on the spotless table of his mind, he was able to dissect them with the scalpel of intuitive reasoning, and to separate errors and interpolations of scholars from the truths as originally expressed by the prophets.

"Fix one's vision on the end of the nose." This inaccurate interpretation of a Bhagavad Gita stanza,* widely accepted by Eastern pundits and Western translators, used to arouse Master's droll criticism.

"The path of a yogi is singular enough as it is," he remarked. "Why counsel him that he must also make himself cross-eyed? The true meaning of *nasikagram* is 'origin of the nose,' not 'end of the nose.' The nose originates at the point between the eyebrows, the seat of spiritual vision."†

One *Sankhya*‡ aphorism reads: *Ishwar asiḍḍheṣ* ("A Lord of Creation cannot be deduced" or "God is not proved"). Chiefly on the basis of this sentence, most scholars call the whole philosophy atheistical.

"The verse is not atheistical," Sri Yukteswar explained. "It merely signifies that to the unenlightened man, dependent on his senses for all final judgments, proof of God must remain unknown and therefore nonexistent. True *Sankhya* followers, with unshakable insight born of meditation, understand that the Lord is both existent and knowable."

Master expounded the Christian Bible with a beautiful clarity. It was from my Hindu guru, unknown to the roll call of Christian

Dire pronouncements are occasionally published regarding an imminent "end of the world." Planetary cycles, however, proceed according to an orderly divine plan. No earthly dissolution is in sight; many ascending and descending equinoctial cycles are yet in store for our planet in its present form.

* Chapter VI:13.

† "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness."—*Luke* 11:34-35 (Bible).

‡ One of the six systems of Hindu philosophy. *Sankhya* teaches final emancipation through knowledge of twenty-five principles, starting with *prakṛiti* or nature and ending with *puruṣa* or soul.

§ *Sankhya Aphorisms*, 1:92.

membership, that I learned to perceive the deathless essence of the Bible, and to understand the truth in Christ's assertion—surely the most thrillingly intransigent ever uttered: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*

The great masters of India mould their lives by the same godly ideals that animated Jesus; these men are his proclaimed kin: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."† "If ye continue in my word," Christ pointed out, "then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."‡ Freemen all, lords of themselves, the Yogi-Christ of India are part of the immortal fraternity: those that attain a liberating knowledge of the One Father.

"The Adam and Eve story is incomprehensible to me!" I observed with considerable heat one day in my early struggles with the allegory. "Why did God punish not only the guilty pair, but also the innocent unborn generations?"

Master was amused, more by my vehemence than by my ignorance. "Genesis is deeply symbolic, and cannot be grasped by a literal interpretation," he explained. "Its 'tree of life' is the human body. The spinal cord is like an upturned tree, with man's hair as its roots, and afferent and efferent nerves as branches. The tree of the nervous system bears many enjoyable fruits, or sensations of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. In these, man may rightfully indulge; but he was forbidden the experience of sex, the 'apple' at the centre of the body ('in the midst of the garden').§

"The 'serpent' represents the coiled-up spinal energy that stimulates the sex nerves. 'Adam' is reason, and 'Eve' is feeling. When

* *Matthew* 24:35 (Bible).

† *Matthew* 12:50 (Bible).

‡ *John* 8:31–32 (Bible). St. John testified: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (even to them that are established in the omnipresent Christ Consciousness)." — *John* 1:12 (Bible).

§ "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." — *Genesis* 3:2–3 (Bible).

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the emotion or Eve-consciousness in any human being is overpowered by the sex impulse, his reason or Adam also succumbs.*

"God created the human species by materializing the bodies of man and woman through the force of His will; He endowed the new species with the power to create children in a similar 'immaculate' or divine manner.† Because His manifestation in the individualized soul had hitherto been limited to animals, instinct-bound and lacking the potentialities of full reason, God made the first human bodies, symbolically called Adam and Eve. To these, for advantageous upward evolution, He transferred the souls or divine essence of two animals.‡ In Adam or man, reason predominated; in Eve or woman, feeling was ascendant. Thus was expressed the duality or polarity that underlies the phenomenal worlds. Reason and feeling remain in a heaven of cooperative joy so long as the human mind is not tricked by the serpentine energy of animal propensities.

"The human body was therefore not solely a result of evolution from beasts, but was produced through an act of special creation by God. The animal forms were too crude to express full divinity; man was uniquely given the potentially omniscient 'thousand-petalled lotus' in the brain, as well as acutely awakened occult centres in the spine.

"God, or the Divine Consciousness present within the first created pair, counselled them to enjoy all human sensibilities, with one exception: sex sensations.§ These were banned, lest humanity enmesh itself in the inferior animal method of propagation. The warning not to revive subconsciously present bestial memories was unheeded. Resuming the way of brute procreation, Adam and Eve

* "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. The woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."—*Genesis* 3:12–13 (Bible).

† "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."—*Genesis* 1:27–28 (Bible).

‡ "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."—*Genesis* 2:7 (Bible).

§ "Now the serpent (sex force) was more subtil than any beast of the field" (any other sense of the body).—*Genesis* 3:1 (Bible).

fell from the state of heavenly joy natural to the original perfect man. When 'they knew that they were naked,' their consciousness of immortality was lost, even as God had warned them; they had placed themselves under the physical law by which bodily birth must be followed by bodily death.

"The knowledge of 'good and evil,' promised Eve by the 'serpent,' refers to the dualistic and oppositional experiences that mortals under *maya* must undergo. Falling into delusion through misuse of his feeling and reason, or Eve-and Adam-consciousness, man relinquishes his right to enter the heavenly garden of divine self-sufficiency.* The personal responsibility of every human being is to restore his 'parents' or dual nature to a unified harmony or Eden."

As Sri Yukteswar ended his discourse, I glanced with new respect at the pages of Genesis.

"Dear Master," I said, "for the first time I feel a proper filial obligation toward Adam and Eve!"†

* "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed."—*Genesis* 2:8 (Bible). "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."—*Genesis* 3:23 (Bible). The divine man first made by God had his consciousness centered in the omnipotent single eye in the forehead (eastward). The all-creative powers of his will, focused at that spot, were lost to man when he began to "till the ground" of his physical nature.

† The "Adam and Eve" story of the Hindus is recounted in the hoary *purana*, *Srimad Bhagavata*. The first man and woman (beings in physical form) are called Swayambhuva Manu ("man born of the Creator") and his wife Satarupa ("true image"). Their five children intermarried with *Prajapatis* (perfect beings who could assume corporeal form); from these first divine families was born the human race.

Never in East or West have I heard anyone else expound the Christian scriptures with so deep a spiritual insight as Sri Yukteswar's. "Theologians have misinterpreted Christ's words," Master said, "in such passages as 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me' (*John* 14:6, Bible). Jesus meant, never that he was the sole Son of God, but that no man can attain the unqualified Absolute, the transcendent Father *beyond* creation, until he has first manifested the 'Son' or activating Christ Consciousness *within* creation. Jesus, who had achieved entire oneness with that Christ Consciousness, identified himself with it inasmuch as his own ego had long since been dissolved." (See page 144 n.)

When Paul wrote: "God...created all things by Jesus Christ" (*Ephesians* 3:9, Bible) and when Jesus said: "Before Abraham was, I am" (*John* 8:58, Bible), the sheer essence of the words is impersonality.

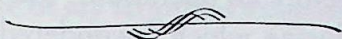
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A form of spiritual cowardice leads many worldly people to believe comfortably that only one man was the Son of God. "Christ was uniquely created," they reason, "so how can I, a mere mortal, emulate Him?" But all men have been divinely created, and must someday obey Christ's command: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (*Matthew 5:48*, Bible). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (*I John 3:1*, Bible).

Understanding of the law of karma and of its corollary, reincarnation (see pp. 257 n., 318-19, and chapter 43), is displayed in numerous Biblical passages; e.g., "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (*Genesis 9:6*, Bible). If every murderer must himself be killed "by man," the reactive process obviously requires, in many cases, more than one life-time. The contemporary police are just not quick enough!

The early Christian church accepted the doctrine of reincarnation, which was expounded by the Gnostics and by numerous church fathers, including Clement of Alexandria, the celebrated Origen (both 3rd century), and St. Jerome (5th century). The doctrine was first declared a heresy in A.D. 553 by the Second Council of Constantinople. At that time many Christians thought the doctrine of reincarnation afforded man too ample a stage of time and space to encourage him to strive for immediate salvation. But truths suppressed lead disconcertingly to a host of errors. The millions have not utilized their "one lifetime" to seek God, but to enjoy this world — so uniquely won, and so shortly to be forever lost! The truth is that man reincarnates on earth until he has consciously regained his status as a son of God.

Sasi and the Three Sapphires



"Because you and my son think so highly of Swami Sri Yukteswar, I will take a look at him." The tone of voice used by Dr. Narayan Chunder Roy implied that he was humouring the whim of half-wits. I concealed my indignation, in the best tradition of the proselyter.

My companion, a veterinary surgeon, was a confirmed agnostic. His young son Santosh had implored me to take an interest in his father. So far, my invaluable aid had been a bit on the invisible side.

Dr. Roy accompanied me the following day to the Serampore hermitage. After Master had granted him a brief interview, marked for the most part by stoic silence on both sides, the visitor brusquely departed.

"Why bring a dead man to the ashram?" Sri Yukteswar looked at me inquiringly as soon as the door had closed on the Calcutta skeptic.

"Sir! The doctor is very much alive!"

"But in a short time he will be dead."

I was shocked. "Sir, this will be a terrible blow to his son. Santosh yet hopes for time to change his father's materialistic views. I beseech you, Master, to help the man."

"Very well—for your sake." My guru's face was impassive. "The proud horse doctor is far gone in diabetes, although he does

not know it. In fifteen days he will take to his bed. The physicians will give him up for lost; his natural time to leave this earth is six weeks from today. Owing to your intercession, however, on that date he will recover. But there is one condition: you must get him to wear an astrological bangle. He will doubtless object as violently as one of his horses before an operation." Master chuckled.

After a silence, during which I wondered how Santosh and I might best employ the arts of cajolery on the doctor, Sri Yukteswar made further disclosures.

"As soon as the man gets well, advise him not to eat meat. He will not heed this counsel, however; and in six months, just as he is feeling at his best, he will drop dead." My guru added, "The six-month extension of life is granted him only because of your plea."

The following day I suggested to Santosh that he order an armlet at the jeweller's. It was ready in a week, but Dr. Roy refused to put it on.

"I am in the best of health. You will never impress me with these astrological superstitions." The doctor glanced at me beligerently.

I recalled with amusement that Master had justifiably compared the man to a balky horse. Another seven days passed; the doctor, suddenly ill, meekly consented to wear the bangle. Two weeks later the physician in attendance told me that his patient's case was hopeless. He supplied harrowing details of the ravages inflicted by diabetes.

I shook my head. "My guru has said that, after a sickness lasting one month, Dr. Roy will be well."

The physician stared at me incredulously. But he sought me out a fortnight later, with an apologetic air.

"Dr. Roy has made a complete recovery!" he exclaimed. "It is the most amazing case in my experience. Never before have I seen a dying man show such an inexplicable comeback. Your guru must indeed be a healing prophet!"

After one interview with Dr. Roy, during which I repeated Sri Yukteswar's advice about a meatless diet, I did not see the man again for six months. He stopped for a chat one evening as I sat on the piazza of my family home.

"Tell your teacher that by eating meat frequently, I have wholly regained my strength. His unscientific ideas on diet have not influenced me." It was true that Dr. Roy looked a picture of health.

But the next day Santosh came running to me from his home on the next block. "This morning Father dropped dead!"

This case was one of my strangest experiences with Master. He healed the rebellious veterinary surgeon in spite of his disbelief, and extended the man's natural term on earth by six months, just because of my earnest supplication. Sri Yukteswar was boundless in his kindness when responding to an urgent prayer of a devotee.

It was my proudest privilege to bring college friends to meet my guru. Many of them would lay aside—at least in the ashram!—their fashionable academic cloak of religious skepticism.

One of my friends, Sasi, spent a number of happy weekends in Serampore. Master became immensely fond of the boy, and lamented that his private life was wild and disorderly.

"Sasi, unless you reform, one year hence you will be dangerously ill." Sri Yukteswar gazed at my friend with affectionate exasperation. "Mukunda is the witness; don't say later that I didn't warn you."

Sasi laughed. "Master, I will leave it to you to interest a sweet charity of cosmos in my own sad case! My spirit is willing but my will is weak. You are my only saviour on earth; I believe in nothing else."

"At least you should wear a two-carat blue sapphire. It will help you."

"I can't afford one. Anyhow, dear Gurujī, if trouble comes, I fully believe you will protect me."

"In a year you will bring three sapphires," Sri Yukteswar replied. "They will be of no use then."

Variations on this conversation took place regularly. "I can't reform!" Sasi would say in comical despair. "And my trust in you, Master, is more precious to me than any stone!"

A year passed. One day I was visiting my guru at the Calcutta home of his disciple, Naren Babu. About ten o'clock in the morning, as Sri Yukteswar and I were sitting in the second-floor parlor, I heard the front door open. Master straightened stiffly.

"It is that Sasi," he remarked gravely. "The year is now up; both his lungs are gone. He has ignored my counsel; tell him I don't want to see him."

Half stunned by Sri Yukteswar's sternness, I raced down the stairway. Sasi was ascending.

"O Mukunda! I do hope Master is here; I had a hunch he might be."

"Yes, but he doesn't wish to be disturbed."

Sasi burst into tears and brushed past me. He threw himself at Sri Yukteswar's feet, placing there three beautiful sapphires.

"Omniscient Guru, the doctors say I have pulmonary tuberculosis. They give me only three months to live! I humbly implore your aid; I know you can heal me!"

"Isn't it a bit late now to be worrying over your life? Depart with your jewels; their time of usefulness is past." Master then sat sphinxlike in an unrelenting silence, punctuated by the boy's sobs for mercy.

An intuitive conviction came to me that Sri Yukteswar was merely testing the depth of Sasi's faith in the divine healing power. I was not surprised a tense hour later when Master turned a sympathetic gaze on my prostrate friend.

"Get up, Sasi; what a commotion you make in another person's house! Return the sapphires to the jeweller's; they are an unnecessary expense now. But get an astrological bangle and wear it. Fear not; in a few weeks you shall be well."

Sasi's smile illumined his tear-marred face like sudden sun over a sodden landscape. "Beloved Guru, shall I take the medicines prescribed by the doctors?"

"Just as you wish—drink them or discard them; it does not matter. It is as impossible for you to die of tuberculosis as it would be for the sun and moon to interchange their positions." Sri Yukteswar added abruptly, "Go now, before I change my mind!"

With an agitated bow, my friend hastily departed. I visited him several times during the next few weeks, and was aghast to find his condition increasingly worse.

"Sasi cannot last through the night." These words from his physician, and the spectacle of my friend, now reduced almost to a

skeleton, sent me posthaste to Serampore. My guru listened coldly to my tearful report.

"Why do you come here to bother me? You have already heard me assure Sasi of his recovery."

I bowed before him in great awe, and retreated to the door. Sri Yukteswar said no parting word, but sank into silence, his unwinking eyes half open, their vision fled to another world.

I returned at once to Sasi's home in Calcutta. With astonishment I found my friend sitting up, drinking milk.

"O Mukunda! What a miracle! Four hours ago I felt Master's presence in the room; my terrible symptoms immediately disappeared. I feel that through his grace I am entirely well."

In a few weeks Sasi was stouter and in better health than ever before.* But his reaction to his healing was tinged with ingratitude: he seldom visited Sri Yukteswar again! My friend told me one day that he so deeply regretted his previous mode of life that he was ashamed to face Master.

I could only conclude that Sasi's illness had had the contrasting effect of stiffening his will and impairing his manners.

The first two years of my course at Scottish Church College were drawing to a close. My classroom attendance had been very spasmodic; what little studying I did was only to keep peace with my family. My two private tutors came regularly to my house; I was regularly absent: I discern at least this one regularity in my scholastic career!

In India two successful years of college bring an Intermediate Arts diploma; the student may then look forward to another two years and his A.B. degree.

The Intermediate Arts final examinations loomed ominously ahead. I fled to Puri, where my guru was spending a few weeks. Vaguely hoping that he would say I need not appear at the finals, I told him of my unpreparedness.

Sri Yukteswar smiled consolingly. "You have wholeheartedly pursued your spiritual duties, and could not help neglecting your

* In 1936 I heard from a friend that Sasi was still in excellent health.

college work. Apply yourself diligently to your books for the next week; you shall get through your ordeal without failure."

I returned to Calcutta, firmly suppressing the reasonable doubts that occasionally assailed me. Surveying the mountain of books on my table, I felt like a traveller lost in a wilderness.

A long period of meditation brought me a labour-saving inspiration. Opening each book at random, I studied only those pages that lay thus exposed. After I had pursued this course during eighteen hours a day for one week, I considered myself an expert on the art of cramming.

The following days in the examination halls were a justification of my seemingly haphazard procedure. I passed all the tests, though by a hairbreadth. The congratulations of my friends and family were ludicrously mixed with ejaculations betraying their astonishment.

On his return from Puri, Sri Yukteswar gave me a pleasant surprise.

"Your Calcutta studies are now over," he said. "I shall see that you pursue your last two years of university work right here in Serampore."

I was puzzled. "Sir, there is no Bachelor of Arts course in this town." Serampore College, the sole institution of higher learning, offered only a two-year course in Intermediate Arts.

Master smiled mischievously. "I am too old to go about collecting donations to establish an A.B. college for you. I guess I shall have to arrange the matter through someone else."

Two months later Professor Howells, president of Serampore College, publicly announced that he had succeeded in raising sufficient funds to offer a four-year course. Serampore College became an affiliated branch of Calcutta University. I was one of the first students to enroll in Serampore as an A.B. candidate.

"Guruji, how kind you are to me! I have been longing to leave Calcutta and be near you every day in Serampore. Professor Howells does not dream how much he owes to your silent help!"

Sri Yukteswar gazed at me with mock severity. "Now you won't have to spend so many hours on trains; what a lot of free time for your studies! Perhaps you will become less of a last-minute

Sasi and the Three Sapphires

crammer and more of a scholar."

But somehow his tone lacked conviction.*

* Sri Yukteswar, like many another sage, grieved at the materialistic trend of modern education. Few schools expound the spiritual laws for happiness or teach that wisdom consists in guiding one's life in the "fear of God," that is, in awe of one's Maker.

Young people, who today hear in high schools and colleges that man is merely a "higher animal," often become atheists. They do not attempt any soul exploration or consider themselves, in their essential nature, to be "images of God." Emerson observed: "That only which we have within, can we see without. If we meet no gods, it is because we harbour none." He who imagines his animal nature to be his only reality is cut off from divine aspirations.

An educational system that does not present Spirit as the central Fact of man's existence is offering *avidya*, false knowledge. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (*Revelation 3:17*, Bible).

The education of youth in ancient India was ideal. At the age of nine, the pupil was received "as a son" in a *gurukula* (guru's family home as a seat of learning). "The modern boy spends [annually] an eighth of his time at school; the Indian spent his whole time there," Professor S. V. Venkateswara writes in *Indian Culture Through the Ages* (Vol. I; Longmans, Green & Co.). "There was a healthy feeling of solidarity and responsibility, and ample opportunity for the exercise of self-reliance and individuality. There was a high standard of culture, self-imposed discipline, and stern regard for duty, selfless action, and sacrifice, combined with self-respect and reverence for others; a high standard of academic dignity, and a sense of...the nobility and the great purpose of human life."

college work. Apply yourself diligently to your books for the next week; you shall get through your ordeal without failure."

I returned to Calcutta, firmly suppressing the reasonable doubts that occasionally assailed me. Surveying the mountain of books on my table, I felt like a traveller lost in a wilderness.

A long period of meditation brought me a labour-saving inspiration. Opening each book at random, I studied only those pages that lay thus exposed. After I had pursued this course during eighteen hours a day for one week, I considered myself an expert on the art of cramming.

The following days in the examination halls were a justification of my seemingly haphazard procedure. I passed all the tests, though by a hairbreadth. The congratulations of my friends and family were ludicrously mixed with ejaculations betraying their astonishment.

On his return from Puri, Sri Yukteswar gave me a pleasant surprise.

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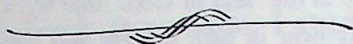
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CHAPTER 18

A Mohammedan Wonder-Worker



"Years ago, right in this very room you now occupy, a Mohammedan wonder-worker performed four miracles before me!"

Sri Yukteswar made this statement during his first visit to my new quarters. Immediately after entering Serampore College, I had taken a room in a nearby boardinghouse, called Panthi.* It was an old-fashioned brick mansion, fronting the Ganges.

"Master, what a coincidence! Are these newly decorated walls really ancient with memories?" I looked around my simply furnished room with awakened interest.

"It is a long story." My guru smiled reminiscently. "The name of the *fakir*† was Afzal Khan. He had acquired his extraordinary powers through a chance encounter with a Hindu yogi.

"Son, I am thirsty; fetch me some water.' A dust-covered *sannyasi* made this request of Afzal one day during his early boyhood in a small village of eastern Bengal.

"Master, I am a Mohammedan. How could you, a Hindu, accept a drink from my hands?"

"Your truthfulness pleases me, my child. I do not observe the ostracizing rules of ungodly sectarianism. Go, bring me water quickly.'

* Residence for students; from *pantha*, wanderer, seeker of knowledge.

† A Moslem yogi; from the Arabic *faqir*, poor; originally applied to dervishes under a vow of poverty.

"Afzal's reverent obedience was rewarded by a loving glance from the yogi.

"'You possess good karma from former lives,' he observed solemnly. 'I am going to teach you a certain yoga method that will give you command over one of the invisible realms. The great powers that will be yours should be exercised for worthy ends; never employ them selfishly! I perceive, alas! that you have brought over from the past some seeds of destructive tendencies. Do not allow them to sprout by watering them with fresh evil actions. The complexity of your previous karma is such that you must use this life to reconcile your yogic accomplishments with the highest humanitarian goals.'

"After instructing the amazed boy in a complicated technique, the master vanished.

"Afzal faithfully followed his yoga exercise for twenty years. His miraculous feats began to attract widespread attention. It seems that he was always accompanied by a disembodied spirit whom he called 'Hazrat.' This invisible entity was able to fulfill the *fakir's* slightest wish.

"Ignoring his master's warning, Afzal began to misuse his powers. Whatever object he took up and then replaced would soon disappear without a trace. This disconcerting eventuality usually made the Mohammedan an objectionable guest!

"He visited large jewelry stores in Calcutta from time to time, representing himself as a possible purchaser. Any jewel he handled would vanish shortly after he had left the shop.

"Afzal was often surrounded by several hundred students, attracted by the hope of learning his secrets. The *fakir* occasionally invited them to travel with him. At the railway station he would manage to touch a roll of tickets. These he would push toward the clerk, remarking: 'I have changed my mind, and won't buy them now.' But when he boarded the train with his retinue, Afzal would be in possession of the required tickets.*

* My father later told me that his company, the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, had been one of the firms victimized by Afzal Khan.

"These exploits created an indignant uproar; Bengali jewellers and ticket-sellers were succumbing to nervous breakdowns! The police who sought to arrest Afzal found themselves helpless; the *fakir* could remove incriminating evidence merely by saying: 'Hazrat, take this away.' "

Sri Yukteswar rose from his seat and walked to the balcony of my room, which overlooked the Ganges. I followed him, eager to hear more of the baffling Mohammedan Raffles.

"This Panthi house formerly belonged to a friend of mine. He became acquainted with Afzal and asked him here. My friend also invited about twenty neighbours, including myself. I was only a youth then, and felt a lively curiosity about the notorious *fakir*." Master laughed. "I took the precaution of not wearing anything valuable! Afzal looked me over inquisitively, then remarked:

"You have powerful hands. Go downstairs to the garden; get a smooth stone and write your name on it with chalk; then throw the stone as far as possible into the Ganges."

"I obeyed. As soon as the stone had vanished under distant waves, the Mohammedan addressed me again:

"Fill a pot with Ganges water near the front of this house."

"After I had returned with a vessel of water, the *fakir* cried, 'Hazrat, put the stone in the pot!'

"The stone appeared at once. I removed it from the vessel and found my signature as legible as when I had written it.

"Babu,* one of my friends in the room, was wearing a heavy antique gold watch and chain. The *fakir* examined them with ominous admiration. Soon they were missing!

"Afzal, please return my prized heirloom!' Babu was nearly in tears.

"The Mohammedan was stoically silent for a while, then said, 'You have five hundred rupees in an iron safe. Bring them to me, and I will tell you where to locate your timepiece.'

"The distraught Babu left immediately for his home. He came

* I do not recall the name of Sri Yukteswar's friend, and must refer to him simply as "Babu".

back shortly and handed Afzal the required sum.

"Go to the little bridge near your house,' the *fakir* instructed Babu. 'Call on Hazrat to give you the watch and chain.'

"Babu rushed away. On his return, he was wearing a smile of relief and no jewelry whatever.

"When I commanded Hazrat as directed,' he announced, 'my watch came tumbling down the air into my right hand! You may be sure I locked the heirloom in my safe before rejoining the group here!'

"Babu's friends, witnesses of the comicotragedy of the ransom for a watch, were staring with resentment at Afzal. He now spoke placatingly.

"Please name any drink you want; Hazrat will produce it.'

"A number asked for milk, others for fruit juices. I was not too much shocked when the unnerved Babu requested whisky! The Mohammedan gave an order; the obliging Hazrat sent sealed containers sailing down and thudding to the floor. Each man found his desired beverage.

"The promise of the fourth spectacular feat of the day was doubtless gratifying to our host: Afzal offered to supply an instantaneous lunch!

"Let us order the most expensive dishes,' Babu suggested gloomily. 'I want an elaborate meal for my five hundred rupees. Everything should be served on gold plates!'

"As soon as each man had expressed his preferences, the *fakir* addressed himself to the inexhaustible Hazrat. A great rattle ensued; gold platters filled with intricately prepared curries, hot luchis, and many out-of-season fruits landed from nowhere at our feet. All the food was delicious. After feasting for an hour, we started to leave the room. A tremendous noise, as though dishes were being piled up, caused us to turn around. Lo! there was no sign of the glittering plates or the remnants of the meal."

"Guruji," I interrupted, "if Afzal could easily secure such things as gold dishes, why did he covet the property of others?"

"The *fakir* was not highly developed spiritually," Sri Yukteswar explained. "His mastery of a certain yoga technique gave him access to an astral plane where any desire is immediately materialized.

Through the agency of an astral being, Hazrat, the Mohammedan could summon the atoms of any object from etheric energy by an act of powerful will. But such astrally produced objects are structurally evanescent; they cannot be long retained.* Afzal still yearned for worldly wealth, which, though more hardly earned, has a more dependable durability."

I laughed. "It, too, sometimes vanishes unaccountably!"

"Afzal was not a man of God-realization," Master went on. "Miracles of a permanent and beneficial nature are performed by true saints because they have attuned themselves to the omnipotent Creator. Afzal was merely an ordinary man with an extraordinary power of penetrating a subtle realm not usually entered by mortals until death."

"I understand now, Guruji. The afterworld appears to have some charming features."

Master agreed. "I never saw Afzal after that day, but a few years later Babu came to my home to show me a newspaper account of the Mohammedan's public confession. From it I learned the facts I have just told you about Afzal's early initiation from a Hindu guru."

The gist of the latter part of the published document, as recalled by Sri Yukteswar, was as follows: "I, Afzal Khan, am writing these words as an act of penance and as a warning to those who seek the possession of miraculous powers. For years I have been misusing the wondrous abilities imparted to me through the grace of God and my master. I became drunk with egotism, feeling that I was beyond the ordinary laws of morality. My day of reckoning finally arrived.

"Recently I met an old man on a road outside Calcutta. He limped along painfully, carrying a shining object that looked like gold. I addressed him with greed in my heart

"I am Afzal Khan, the great *fakir*. What have you there?"

"This ball of gold is my sole material wealth; it can be of no interest to a *fakir*. I implore you, sir, to heal my limp."

* Just as my silver amulet, an astrally produced object, finally vanished from this earth. (The astral world is described in chapter 43.)

"I touched the ball and walked away without reply. The old man hobbled after me. He soon raised an outcry: 'My gold is gone!'

"As I paid no attention, he suddenly spoke in a stentorian voice that issued oddly from his frail body:

"Do you not recognize me?"

"I stood speechless, aghast at the belated discovery that this unimpressive old cripple was none other than the great saint who, long, long ago, had initiated me into yoga. He straightened himself; his body instantly became strong and youthful.

"So! My guru's glance was fiery. 'I see with my own eyes that you use your powers, not to help suffering humanity; but to prey on it like a common thief! I withdraw your occult gifts; Hazrat is now freed from you. No longer shall you be a terror in Bengal!'

"I called on Hazrat in anguished tones; for the first time, he did not appear to my inner sight. But a dark veil suddenly lifted; I saw clearly the blasphemy of my life.

"My guru, I thank you for coming to banish my long delusion.' I was sobbing at his feet. 'I promise to forsake my worldly ambitions. I will retire to the mountains for lonely meditation on God, hoping to atone for my evil past.'

"My master regarded me with silent compassion. 'I feel your sincerity,' he said finally. 'Because of your earlier years of strict obedience, and because of your present repentance, I will grant you one boon. Your other powers are now gone, but whenever food and clothing are needed, you may still call successfully on Hazrat to supply them. Devote yourself wholeheartedly to divine understanding in the mountain solitudes.'

"My guru then vanished; I was left to my tears and reflections. Farewell, world! I go to seek the forgiveness of the Cosmic Beloved."

My Master, in Calcutta, Appears in Serampore



"I am often beset by atheistic doubts. Yet a torturing surmise sometimes haunts me: may not untapped soul possibilities exist? Is man not missing his real destiny if he fails to explore them?"

These remarks of Dijen Babu, my roommate at the Panthi boardinghouse, were called forth by my invitation that he meet my guru.

"Sri Yukteswarji will initiate you into *Kriya Yoga*," I replied. "It calms the dualistic turmoil by a divine inner certainty."

That evening Dijen accompanied me to the hermitage. In Master's presence my friend received such spiritual peace that he was soon a constant visitor.

The trivial preoccupations of daily life do not satisfy our deepest needs; for wisdom, too, man has native hunger. By Sri Yukteswar's words Dijen was inspired to try to discover within him a realer self than the shallow ego of a transient incarnation.

As Dijen and I were both pursuing the A.B. course at Serampore College, we got into the habit of walking together to the ashram as soon as classes were over. We would often see Sri Yukteswar standing on his second-floor balcony, welcoming our approach with a smile.

One afternoon Kanai, a young hermitage resident, met Dijen and me at the door with disappointing news.

"Master is not here; he was summoned to Calcutta by an urgent note."

The following day I received a postcard from my guru. "I shall leave Calcutta Wednesday morning," he had written. "You and Dijen meet the nine a.m. train at Serampore station."

About eight-thirty on Wednesday morning, a telepathic message from Sri Yukteswar flashed insistently to my mind: "I am delayed; don't meet the nine o'clock train."

I conveyed the latest instructions to Dijen, who was already dressed for departure.

"You and your intuition!" My friend's voice was edged in scorn. "I prefer to trust Master's written word."

I shrugged my shoulders and seated myself with quiet finality. Muttering angrily, Dijen made for the door and closed it noisily behind him.

As the room was rather dark, I moved nearer to a window overlooking the street. The scant sunlight suddenly increased to an intense brilliancy in which the iron-barred window completely vanished. Against this dazzling background appeared the clearly materialized figure of Sri Yukteswar!

Bewildered to the point of shock, I rose from my chair and knelt before him. With my customary gesture of respectful greeting at my guru's feet, I touched his shoes. These were a pair familiar to me, of orange-dyed canvas, soled with rope. His ochre swami cloth brushed against me; I distinctly felt not only the texture of his robe, but also the gritty surface of the shoes, and the pressure of his toes within them. Too much astounded to utter a word, I stood up and gazed at him questioningly.

"I was pleased that you got my telepathic message." Master's voice was calm, entirely normal. "I have now finished my business in Calcutta, and shall arrive in Serampore by the ten o'clock train."

As I still stared mutely, Sri Yukteswar went on, "This is not an apparition, but my flesh and blood form. I have been divinely commanded to give you this experience, rarely known on earth. Meet me at the station; you and Dijen will see me coming toward you,

dressed as I am now. I shall be preceded by a fellow passenger—a little boy carrying a silver jug.”

My guru placed both hands on my head, with a murmured blessing. As he concluded with the words, “*Tabe asi*,”* I heard a peculiar rumbling sound.† His body began to melt gradually within the piercing light. First his feet and legs vanished, then his torso and head, like a scroll being rolled up. To the very last, I could feel his fingers resting lightly on my hair. The effulgence faded; nothing remained before me but the barred window and a pale stream of sunlight.

I remained in a half-stupor, questioning whether I had not been the victim of a hallucination. A crestfallen Dijen soon entered the room.

“Master was not on the nine o’clock train or even the nine-thirty.” My friend made his announcement with a slightly apologetic air.

“Come, I know he will arrive at ten o’clock.” I took Dijen’s hand and rushed him forcibly along with me, heedless of his protests. In about ten minutes we entered the station, where the train was already puffing to a halt.

“The whole train is filled with the light of Master’s aura! He is there!” I exclaimed joyfully.

“You dream so?” Dijen laughed mockingly.

“Let us wait here.” I told my friend details of the way in which our guru would approach us. As I finished my description, Sri Yukteswar came into view, wearing the same clothes I had seen a short time earlier. He walked slowly in the wake of a small lad bearing a silver jug.

For a moment a wave of cold fear passed through me, at the incredible strangeness of my experience. I felt the materialistic twentieth-century world slipping from me; was I back in the ancient days when Jesus appeared before Peter on the sea?

As Sri Yukteswar, a modern Yogi-Christ, neared the place

* The Bengali “Good-bye”; literally, it is a hopeful paradox: “Then I come.”

† The characteristic sound of dematerialization of bodily atoms.

where Dijen and I were standing speechless, Master smiled at my friend and remarked:

"I sent you a message too, but you were unable to grasp it."

Dijen was silent, but glared at me suspiciously. After we had escorted our guru to his hermitage, my friend and I proceeded toward Serampore College. Dijen halted in the street, indignation streaming from his every pore.

"So! Master sent me a message! Yet you concealed it! I demand an explanation!"

"Can I help it if your mental mirror oscillates with such restlessness that you cannot register our guru's instructions?" I retorted.

The anger vanished from Dijen's face. "I see what you mean," he said ruefully. "But please explain how you could know about the child with the jug."

By the time I had finished the story of Master's phenomenal appearance at the boardinghouse that morning, my friend and I had reached Serampore College.

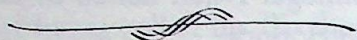
"The account I have just heard of our guru's powers," Dijen said, "makes me feel that any university in the world is only a kindergarten."*

* "Such things have been revealed to me that now all I have written appears in my eyes as of no greater value than straw."

So spoke St. Thomas Aquinas, the "Prince of Scholastics," in answer to his secretary's anxious urgings that *Summa Theologiae* be completed. One day in 1273, during Mass in a Naples church, St. Thomas experienced a profound mystical insight. The glory of divine knowledge so overwhelmed him that henceforth he took no interest in intellectuality.

Cf. Socrates' words (in Plato's *Phaedrus*): "As for me, all I know is that I know nothing."

We Do Not Visit Kashmir



"Father, I want to invite Master and four friends to accompany me to the Himalayan foothills during my summer vacation. May I have six railway passes to Kashmir and enough money to cover our travel expenses?"

As I had expected, Father laughed heartily. "This is the third time you have given me the same cock-and-bull story. Didn't you make a similar request last summer, and the year before that? At the last moment, Sri Yukteswarji refuses to go."

"It is true, Father; I don't know why my guru will not give me his definite word about Kashmir.* But if I tell him that I have already secured the passes from you, somehow I think that this time he will consent to make the journey."

Father was unconvinced at the moment, but the following day, after some good-humoured gibes, he handed me six passes and a roll of ten-rupee notes.

"I hardly think your theoretical trip needs such practical props," he remarked, "but here they are."

That afternoon I exhibited my booty to Sri Yukteswar. Though he smiled at my enthusiasm, his words were noncommittal: "I

* Although Master failed to make any explanation, his reluctance to visit Kashmir during those two summers may have been a foreknowledge that the time was not ripe for his illness there (see pp. 201 f.).

would like to go; we shall see." He made no comment when I asked his little hermitage disciple, Kanai, to accompany us. I also invited three other friends—Rajendra Nath Mitra, Jotin Auddy, and one other boy. Our date of departure was set for the following Monday.

On Saturday and Sunday I stayed in Calcutta, where marriage rites for a cousin were being celebrated at my family home. I arrived in Serampore with my luggage early Monday morning. Rajendra met me at the hermitage door.

"Master is out, walking. He has refused to go."

I was equally grieved and obdurate. "I will not give Father a third chance to ridicule my chimerical plans for Kashmir. The rest of us should go."

Rajendra agreed; I left the ashram to find a servant. Kanai, I knew, would not take the trip without Master, and someone was needed to look after the luggage. I bethought myself of Behari, previously a servant in my family home, who was now employed by a Serampore schoolmaster. As I walked along briskly, I met my guru in front of the Christian church near Serampore Courthouse.

"Where are you going?" Sri Yukteswar's face was unsmiling. "Sir, I hear that you and Kanai will not take the trip we have been planning. I am seeking Behari. You will recall that last year he was so desirous of seeing Kashmir that he even offered to serve without pay."

"I remember. Nevertheless, I don't think Behari will be willing to go."

I was exasperated. "He is just eagerly waiting for this opportunity!"

My guru silently resumed his walk; I soon reached the schoolmaster's house. Behari, in the courtyard, greeted me with a friendly warmth that abruptly vanished as soon as I mentioned Kashmir. With a murmured word of apology, the servant left me and entered his employer's house. I waited half an hour, nervously assuring myself that Behari's delay was being caused by preparations for his trip. Finally I knocked at the front door.

"Behari left by the back stairs about thirty minutes ago," a man informed me. A slight smile hovered about his lips.

I departed sadly, wondering whether my invitation had been

too coercive or whether Master's unseen influence were at work. Passing the Christian church, again I saw my guru walking slowly toward me. Without waiting to hear my report, he exclaimed:

"So Behari would not go! Now, what are your plans?"

I felt like a recalcitrant child who is determined to defy his masterful father. "Sir, I am going to ask my uncle to lend me his servant, Lal Dhari."

"See your uncle if you want to," Sri Yukteswar replied with a chuckle. "But I hardly think you will enjoy the visit."

Apprehensive but rebellious, I left my guru and entered Serampore Courthouse. My paternal uncle, Sarada Ghosh, a government attorney, welcomed me affectionately.

"I am leaving today with some friends for Kashmir," I told him. "For years I have been looking forward to this Himalayan trip."

"I am happy for you, Mukunda. Is there anything I can do to make your journey more comfortable?"

These kind words gave me a lift of encouragement. "Dear Uncle," I said, "could you possibly spare me your servant, Lal Dhari?"

My simple request had the effect of an earthquake. Uncle jumped so violently that his chair overturned, the papers on the desk flew in every direction, and his pipe, a long, coconut-stemmed hubble-bubble, fell to the floor with a great clatter.

"You selfish young man," he shouted, quivering with wrath, "what a preposterous idea! Who will look after me, if you take my servant on one of your pleasure jaunts?"

I concealed my surprise, reflecting that my amiable uncle's sudden change of front was only one more enigma in a day fully devoted to incomprehensibility. My retreat from the courthouse office was more alacritous than dignified.

I returned to the hermitage, where my friends were expectantly gathered. A conviction was growing in me that some sufficient, if exceedingly recondite, motive was behind Master's attitude. Remorse seized me for having tried to thwart my guru's will.

"Mukunda, wouldn't you like to stay a while longer with me?" Sri Yukteswar inquired. "Rajendra and the others may go ahead now, and wait for you in Calcutta. There will be plenty of time to

catch the last evening train leaving Calcutta for Kashmir."

"Sir, I don't care to go without you," I said mournfully.

My friends paid not the slightest attention to my remark. They summoned a hackney carriage and departed with all the luggage. Kanai and I sat quietly at our guru's feet. After a half hour of silence, Master rose and walked toward the second-floor dining balcony.

"Kanai, please serve Mukunda's food. His train leaves soon."

Getting up from my blanket seat, I staggered suddenly with nausea and a ghastly churning sensation in my stomach. The stabbing pain was so intense that I felt I had been abruptly hurled into some violent hell. Groping blindly toward my guru, I collapsed before him, exhibiting all symptoms of the dread Asiatic cholera. Sri Yukteswar and Kanai carried me to the sitting room.

I cried in agony: "Master, I surrender my life to you"; for I believed it was indeed fast ebbing from the shores of my body.

Sri Yukteswar put my head on his lap, stroking my forehead with angelic tenderness.

"You see now what would have happened if you were at the station with your friends," he said. "I had to look after you in this strange way, because you chose to doubt my judgment about taking the trip at this particular time."

I understood at last. As great masters seldom see fit to display their powers openly, a casual observer of the day's events would have considered them quite natural. My guru's intervention had been too subtle to be detected. He had inconspicuously worked his will through Behari and my uncle and Rajendra and the others. Probably everyone but me had thought the situations logical and normal.

As Sri Yukteswar never failed to observe his social obligations, he instructed Kanai to summon a physician and to notify my uncle.

"Master," I protested, "only you can heal me. I am too far gone for any doctor."

"Child, you are protected by the Divine Mercy. Don't worry about the doctor; he will not find you in this state. You are already healed."

With my guru's words, the excruciating suffering left me. I sat

up feebly. A doctor soon arrived and examined me carefully.

"You appear to have passed through the worst," he said. "I will take some specimens with me for laboratory tests."

The following morning the physician arrived hurriedly. I was sitting up, in good spirits.

"Well, well, here you are, smiling and chatting as though you had had no close call with death." He patted my hand gently. "I hardly expected to find you alive, after I had discovered from the specimens that your disease was Asiatic cholera. You are fortunate, young man, to have a guru with divine healing powers! I am convinced of it!"

I agreed wholeheartedly. As the doctor was preparing to leave, Rajendra and Auddy appeared at the door. The resentment in their faces changed into sympathy as they glanced at the physician and then at my somewhat wan countenance.

"We were angry when you didn't turn up as agreed at the Calcutta train. You have been sick?"

"Yes." I could not help laughing as my friends placed the luggage in the same corner it had occupied yesterday. I paraphrased:

"There was a ship that sailed for Spain; before it arrived, it was back again!"

Master entered the room. I permitted myself a convalescent's liberty, and captured his hand lovingly.

"Guruji," I said, "from my twelfth year on, I have made many unsuccessful attempts to reach the Himalayas. I am finally convinced that without your blessings the Goddess Parvati* will not receive me!"

* Lit., "of the mountains." Parvati is mythologically represented as the daughter of King Himalaya (lit., "abode of the snows"), whose home is a certain peak on the Tibetan border. Astonished travellers, passing below that inaccessible peak, view afar a vast snow formation resembling a palace, with icy domes and turrets.

Parvati, Kali, Durga, Uma, and other goddesses are aspects of Jaganmatri, "Divine Mother of the World," variously named to signalize particular functions. God or Shiva in His *para* or transcendental aspect is inactive in creation; His *shakti* (energy, activating force) is relegated to His "consorts," the productive "female" powers that make possible the infinite unfoldments in the cosmos.

Mythological tales in the *Puranas* give the Himalayas as the abode of Shiva. The Goddess Ganga came down from the sky to be the presiding deity of the Himalayan-sourced river; the Ganges is therefore poetically said to flow from heaven to earth through the hair of Shiva, "King of Yogis" and the Destroyer-Renovator of the Trinity. Kalidasa, the "Indian Shakespeare," described the Himalayas as "the massed laughter of Shiva." "The reader may manage to imagine that stretch of great white teeth," writes F. W. Thomas in *The Legacy of India* (Oxford), "but the full idea may still escape him, unless he has realized the figure of the grand Ascete, eternally enthroned in the towering mountain world, where the Ganges in her descent from heaven passes through his matted locks, with the moon their crest-jewel."

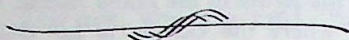
In Hindu art Shiva is often shown wearing an antelope skin of velvet blackness, symbolizing the darkness and mystery of Night—the sole garment of Him who is *digambara*, "sky-clad." Certain Shiva sects wear no clothing in honour of the Lord who owns nothing—and everything.

One of the patron saints of Kashmir, the 14th-century Lalla Yogiswari ("Supreme Mistress of Yoga") was a "sky-clad" Shiva devotee. A scandalized contemporary asked the saint why she observed nudity. "Why not?" Lalla replied tartly. "I see no men about." To Lalla's somewhat drastic way of thinking, he who lacked God-realization did not deserve the name of "man." She practised a technique, closely allied to *Kriya Yoga*, whose liberating efficacy she celebrated in numerous quatrains. I translate one of them here:

What acid of sorrow have I not drunk?
 Countless my rounds of birth and death.
 Lo! naught but nectar in my cup
 Quaffed by the art of breath.

Undergoing no mortal death, the saint dematerialized herself in fire. Later she appeared before her grieving townspeople, a living form enwrapped in golden robes—fully clad at last!

We Visit Kashmir



"You are strong enough now to travel. I will accompany you to Kashmir," Sri Yukteswar informed me two days after my miraculous recovery from Asiatic cholera.

That evening our party of six entrained for the north. Our first leisurely stop was at Simla, a queenly city resting on the throne of Himalayan hills. We strolled over the steep streets, admiring the magnificent views.

"English strawberries for sale," cried an old woman, squatting in a picturesque open marketplace.

Master was curious about the strange little red fruits. He bought a large basket of them and offered it to Kanai and me, who were nearby. I tasted one berry but spat it hastily on the ground.

"Sir, what a sour fruit! I could never like strawberries!"

My guru laughed. "Oh, you will like them—in America. At a dinner there, your hostess will serve them with sugar and cream. After she has mashed the berries with a fork, you will taste them and say: 'What delicious strawberries!' Then you will remember this day in Simla."

(Sri Yukteswar's forecast vanished from my mind, but reappeared there many years later, shortly after my arrival in America. I was a dinner guest at the home of Mrs. Alice T. Hasey [Sister Yogmata] in West Somerville, Massachusetts. When a dessert of strawberries was put on the table, my hostess picked up a fork and

mashed my berries, adding cream and sugar. "The fruit is rather tart; I think you will like it fixed this way," she remarked. I took a mouthful. "What delicious strawberries!" I exclaimed. At once my guru's prediction in Simla emerged from the fathomless cave of memory. I was awestruck to realize that long ago his God-tuned mind had detected the programme of karmic events wandering in the ether of futurity.)

Our party soon left Simla and entrained for Rawalpindi. There we hired a large closed-top landau, drawn by two horses, for a seven-day trip to Srinagar, capital of Kashmir. The second day of our northbound journey brought into view the true Himalayan vastness. As the iron wheels of our carriage creaked along the hot, stony roads, we were enraptured with changing vistas of mountainous grandeur.

"Sir," Auddy said to Master, "I am greatly enjoying these glorious scenes in your holy company."

I felt a throb of pleasure at Auddy's appreciation, for I was acting as host on this trip. Sri Yukteswar caught my thought; he turned to me and whispered:

"Don't flatter yourself; Auddy is not nearly as entranced with the scenery as he is with the prospect of leaving us long enough to have a cigarette."

I was shocked. "Sir," I said in an undertone, "please do not break our harmony by these unpleasant words. I can hardly believe that Auddy is hankering for a smoke." I looked apprehensively at my usually irrepressible guru.

"Very well, I won't say anything to Auddy." Master chuckled. "But you will soon see, when the landau halts, that he is quick to seize his opportunity."

The carriage arrived at a small caravanserai. As our horses were led to be watered, Auddy inquired, "Sir, do you mind if I ride a while with the driver? I would like to get a little outside air."

Sri Yukteswar gave permission, but remarked to me, "He wants fresh smoke and not fresh air."

The landau resumed its noisy progress over the dusty roads. Master's eyes were twinkling; he instructed me: "Crane up your neck through the carriage door and see what Auddy is doing with the air."

I obeyed, and was startled to observe Auddy in the act of

exhaling rings of cigarette smoke. My glance toward Sri Yukteswar was apologetic.

"You are right, as always, sir. Auddy is enjoying a puff along with a panorama." I surmised that my friend had received a gift from the cab driver; I knew that Auddy had not carried any cigarettes from Calcutta.

We continued on the labyrinthine way, delighting in views of rivers, valleys, precipitous crags, and multitudinous mountain tiers. Each night we stopped at a rustic inn and cooked our food. Sri Yukteswar took special care of my diet, insisting that I have lime juice at all meals. I was still weak, but daily improving, though the rattling carriage had been strictly designed for discomfort.

Joyous anticipations filled our hearts as we neared central Kashmir: paradise land of lotus lakes, floating gardens, gaily canopied houseboats, the many-bridged Jhelum River, and flower-strewn pastures, all encircled by the Himalayas.

Our approach to Srinagar was through an avenue of tall, welcoming trees. We engaged rooms at a double-storeyed inn overlooking the noble hills. No running water was available; we drew our supply from a nearby well. The summer weather was ideal: warm days and slightly cold nights.

We made a pilgrimage to an ancient Srinagar temple dedicated to Swami Shankara. As I gazed upon the mountain-peak hermitage, bold against the sky, I fell into an ecstatic trance. A vision appeared of a hilltop mansion in a distant land; the lofty Shankara temple in Srinagar became transformed into the edifice where, years later, I established Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters in America. (When I first visited Los Angeles in California, and saw the large building on the crest of Mount Washington, I recognized it at once from my long-past visions in Kashmir and elsewhere.)

A few days in Srinagar; then on to Gulmarg ("mountain paths of flowers"); eighty-five hundred feet high. There I had my first ride on a large horse. Rajendra mounted a small trotter, one whose heart was fired by ambition for speed. We ventured onto the very steep Khilanmarg; the path led through a dense forest, abounding in tree mushrooms, where the mist-shrouded trails were often precarious. But Rajendra's little animal never permitted my oversized steed a

moment's rest, even at the most perilous turns. On, on, untiringly came Rajendra's horse, oblivious to all but the joy of competition.

Our strenuous race was rewarded by a breathtaking view. For the first time in this life, I gazed in all directions at sublime snow-capped Himalayas, lying tier upon tier like silhouettes of huge polar bears. My eyes feasted exultingly on endless reaches of icy mountains against sunny blue skies.

I rolled merrily with my young companions, all wearing overcoats, on the sparkling white slopes. On our downward trip we saw afar a vast carpet of yellow flowers, wholly transfiguring the bleak hills.

Our next excursions were to the famous "pleasure gardens" of Emperor Jehangir at Shalimar and Nishat Bagh. The ancient palace at Nishat Bagh is built directly over a natural waterfall. Rushing down from the mountains, the torrent has been regulated through ingenious contrivances to flow over colourful terraces and to gush into fountains amidst the dazzling flower-beds. The stream also enters several of the palace rooms, ultimately dropping fairylike into the lake below. The immense gardens are riotous with colour—roses, jasmine, lilies, snapdragons, pansies, lavender, poppies. An emerald encirclement is formed by symmetrical rows of *chinars*, cypresses, cherry trees; beyond them tower the white austerities of the Himalayas.

So-called Kashmir grapes are considered a rare delicacy in Calcutta. Rajendra, who had been talking about the grape feast awaiting us in Kashmir, was disappointed to find there no large vineyards. Now and then I chaffed him over his baseless anticipation.

"Oh, I have become so much gorged with grapes I can't walk!" I would say. "The invisible grapes are brewing within me!" Later we heard that sweet grapes grow abundantly in Kabul, west of Kashmir. We consoled ourselves with ice cream made of *rabri* (heavily condensed milk), flavoured with whole pistachio nuts.

We took several trips in *shikaras*, small boats shaded by red-embroidered canopies, coursing along the intricate channels of Dal Lake—a network of canals like a watery spider web. Here the numerous floating gardens, crudely improvised with logs and earth, strike one with amazement, so incongruous is the first sight

of vegetables and melons growing in the midst of vast waters. Occasionally one sees a peasant, disdaining to be "rooted to the soil," towing his square plot of "land" to a new location in the many-fingered lake.

In this storied vale one finds an epitome of all the earth's beauties. The Lady of Kashmir is mountain-crowned, lake-garlanded, and flower-shod. In later years, after I had toured many countries, I understood why Kashmir is often called the world's most scenic spot. It possesses some of the charms of the Swiss Alps, and of Loch Lomond in Scotland, and of the exquisite English lakes. An American traveller in Kashmir finds much to remind him of the rugged grandeur of Alaska and of Pikes Peak near Denver.

As entries in a scenic beauty contest, I offer for first prize either the gorgeous view of Xochimilco in Mexico, where skies, mountains, and poplars are reflected, amid playful fish, in myriad lanes of water; or the lakes of Kashmir, guarded like beautiful maidens by the stern surveillance of the Himalayas. These two places stand out in my memory as the loveliest spots on earth.

Yet I was awed also when I beheld the wonders of Yellowstone National Park, and of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and of Alaska. Yellowstone is perhaps the only region on earth where one may see numerous geysers erupting high in the air with almost clock-like regularity. In this volcanic area Nature has left a specimen of an earlier creation: hot sulphurous springs, opal- and sapphire-coloured pools, violent geysers, and freely roaming bears, wolves, bison, and other wild creatures. Motoring along the roads of Wyoming to the "Devil's Paint Pot" of bubbling hot mud, observing the gurgling springs, spouting geysers, and vaporous fountains, I was disposed to say that Yellowstone deserves a special prize for uniqueness.

At Yosemite Park in California the ancient majestic sequoias, stretching huge columns far into the sky, are green natural cathedrals designed with skill divine. Though there are wonderful falls in the Orient, none match the torrential beauty of Niagara in New York on the Canadian border. Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico are strange fairylands. Long stalactites, hanging from cave ceilings and mirrored in underground waters, present a glimpse of other worlds as fancied by man.

In Kashmir a large number of the people, world-famed for their beauty, are as white as Europeans and have similar features and bone structure; many are blue-eyed and blondehaired. Dressed in Western clothes they look like Americans. The coldness of the Himalayas affords the Kashmiris relief from the sultry sun and preserves their light complexions. As one travels south to the tropical latitudes of India, he finds progressively that the people are darker and darker.

After spending happy weeks in Kashmir, I was forced to make preparations to return to Bengal for the fall term of Serampore College. Sri Yukteswar, Kanai, and Auddy were to remain in Srinagar a while longer. Shortly before I departed, Master hinted that his body would be subject to suffering in Kashmir.

"Sir, you look a picture of health," I protested.

"There is a chance that I may even leave this earth."

"Guruji!" I fell at his feet with an imploring gesture. "Please promise that you won't leave your body now. I am utterly unprepared to carry on without you."

Sri Yukteswar was silent, but smiled at me so compassionately that I felt reassured. Reluctantly I left him.

"Master dangerously ill." This telegram from Auddy reached me shortly after my return to Serampore.

"Sir," I wired my guru frantically, "I asked for your promise not to leave me. Please keep your body; otherwise, I also shall die."

"Be it as you wish." This was Master's reply from Kashmir.

A letter from Auddy arrived in a few days, informing me that Master had recovered. On his return to Serampore during the next fortnight, I was grieved to find my guru's body reduced to half its usual weight.

Fortunately for his disciples, Sri Yukteswar burned many of their sins in the fire of his severe fever in Kashmir. The metaphysical method of physical transfer of disease is known to highly advanced yogis. A strong man may assist a weak one by helping the latter to carry a heavy load; a spiritual superman is able to minimize the physical and mental troubles of his disciples by assuming a part of their karmic burdens. Just as a rich man relinquishes some money when he pays off a large debt for his prodigal son, who is thus saved from the dire consequences of his folly, so a master

willingly sacrifices a portion of his bodily wealth to lighten the misery of disciples.

By a secret yogic method, the saint unites his mind and astral vehicle with those of a suffering individual; the disease is conveyed, wholly or in part, to the yogi's fleshy form. Having harvested God on the physical field, a master is no longer concerned with his body. Though he may allow it to become diseased in order to relieve other persons, his mind, unpollutable, is not affected. He considers himself fortunate in being able to render such aid. To achieve final salvation in the Lord is indeed to find that the human body has completely fulfilled its purpose; a master then uses it in any way he deems fit.

A guru's work in the world is to alleviate the sorrows of mankind, whether through spiritual means or intellectual counsel or will power or physical transfer of disease. Escaping to the superconsciousness whenever he so desires, a master can become oblivious of physical illness; sometimes, to set an example for disciples, he chooses to bear bodily pain stoically. By putting on the ailments of others, a yogi can satisfy, for them, the karmic law of cause and effect. This law is mechanically or mathematically operative; its workings may be scientifically manipulated by men of divine wisdom.

The spiritual law does not require a master to become ill whenever he heals another person. Healings ordinarily take place through the saint's knowledge of various methods of instantaneous cure in which no hurt to the spiritual healer is involved. On rare occasions, however, a master who wishes to quicken greatly his disciples' evolution may then voluntarily work out on his own body a large measure of their undesirable karma.

Jesus signified himself as a ransom for the sins of many. With his divine powers,* Christ could never have been subjected to death by crucifixion if he had not willingly cooperated with the subtle cosmic law of cause and effect. He thus took on himself the

* Christ said, just before he was led away to be crucified: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

—*Matthew 26:53-54* (Bible).

consequences of others' karma, especially that of his disciples. In this manner they were highly purified and made fit to receive the omnipresent consciousness or Holy Ghost that later descended upon them.*

Only a Self-realized master can transfer his life force or convey into his own body the diseases of others. An ordinary man cannot employ this yogic method of cure; nor is it desirable that he should do so, because an unsound physical instrument is a hindrance to deep meditation. The Hindu scriptures teach that an imperative duty of man is to keep his body in good condition; otherwise his mind is unable to remain fixed in devotional concentration.

A very strong mind, however, can transcend all physical difficulties and attain to God-realization. Many saints have ignored illness and succeeded in their divine quest. St. Francis of Assisi, himself severely afflicted with ailments, healed other men, and even raised the dead.

I once knew an Indian saint, half of whose body, in his earlier years, had been covered with sores. His diabetic illness had been so acute that he had found it difficult to sit still at one time for more than fifteen minutes. But his spiritual aspiration had been undeterable. "Lord," he had prayed, "wilt Thou come into my broken temple?" With ceaseless command of will, the saint had gradually become able to sit in the lotus posture daily for eighteen hours, engrossed in the ecstatic trance. "And," he told me, "at the end of three years I found the Infinite Light blazing within me. Rejoicing in Its splendour, I forgot the body. Later I saw that it had become whole through the Divine Mercy."

A historical healing incident concerns King Baber (1483-1530), founder of the Mogul empire in India. His son Humayun became gravely ill. The father prayed with anguished determination that he receive the malady and that his son be spared. Humayun† recovered; Baber immediately fell sick and died

* Acts 1:8; 2:1-4 (Bible).

† Humayun became the father of Akbar the Great. With Islamic zeal, Akbar at first persecuted the Hindus. "As I grew in knowledge, I was overwhelmed with shame," he said later. "Miracles occur in the temples of every creed." He arranged for a Persian

of the same disease that had stricken his son.

Many persons believe that a great master should have the health and strength of a Sandow.* The assumption is unfounded. A sickly body does not indicate that a guru is lacking in divine powers, any more than lifelong health necessarily indicates inner illumination. The distinguishing qualifications of a master are not physical but spiritual.

Numerous bewildered seekers in the West erroneously think that an eloquent speaker or writer on metaphysics must be a master. Proof that one is a master, however, is supplied only by the ability to enter at will the breathless state (*sabikalpa samādhi*) and by the attainment of immutable bliss (*nirbikalpa samādhi*).† The rishis have pointed out that solely by these achievements may a human being demonstrate that he has mastered *maya*, the dualistic cosmic delusion. He alone may say from the depths of realization: "*Ekam sat*" ("Only One exists").

"When there is duality because of ignorance, one sees all things as distinct from the Self," Shankara, the great monist has written. "When everything is known as the Self, not even an atom is seen as other than the Self.... As soon as knowledge of the Reality has sprung up, there can be no fruits of past actions to be experienced, owing to the unreality of the body, just as there can be no dream after waking."

Only great gurus are able to assume the karma of disciples. Sri Yukteswar would not have suffered in Srinagar‡ unless he had

translation of the Bhagavad Gita, and invited to his court several Jesuit Fathers from Rome. Akbar inaccurately but lovingly attributed to Christ the following saying (inscribed on the Victory Arch in Akbar's new city of Fatehpur Sikri): "Jesus, Son of Mary (on whom be peace), said: *The world is a bridge; pass over it, but build no house upon it.*"

* A German athlete (d. 1925), known as "the world's strongest man."

† See pp. 238, 401 n.

‡ Srinagar, capital city of Kashmir, was founded in the third century B.C. by Emperor Asoka. He built there 500 monasteries, of which 100 were still standing when the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang visited Kashmir 1000 years later. Another Chinese writer, Fa-Hsien (fifth century), viewing the ruins of Asoka's vast palace at Pataliputra (modern Patna), tells us the structure was of such incredible beauty in its architecture and decorative sculpture that it "could have been the work of no mortal hands."

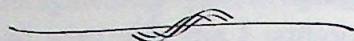
received permission from the Spirit within him to help his disciples in that strange way. Few saints were ever more sensitively equipped with wisdom to carry out divine commands than my God-tuned Master.

When I ventured a few words of sympathy over his emaciated figure, my guru said gaily:

"It has its good points; I am able now to get into some small *ganjis* (undershirts) that I haven't worn for years!"

Listening to Master's jovial laugh, I remembered the words of St. Francis de Sales: "A saint that is sad is a sad saint!"

The Heart of a Stone Image



"As a loyal Hindu wife, I do not wish to complain of my husband. But I yearn to see him turn from his materialistic views. He delights in ridiculing the pictures of saints in my meditation room. Dear brother, I have deep faith that you can help him. Will you?"

My eldest sister Roma gazed beseechingly at me. I was paying a short visit at her Calcutta home on Girish Vidyaratna Lane. Her plea touched me, for she had exercised a profound spiritual influence over my early life, and had lovingly tried to fill the void left in the family circle by Mother's death.

"Beloved sister, of course I will do anything I can." I smiled, eager to lift the gloom plainly visible on her face, in contrast to her usual calm and cheerful expression.

Roma and I sat a while in silent prayer for guidance. A year earlier, my sister had asked me to initiate her in *Kriya Yoga*, in which she was making notable progress.

An inspiration seized me. "Tomorrow," I said, "I am going to the temple of Kali in Dakshineswar. Please come with me, and persuade your husband to accompany us. I feel that in the vibrations of that holy place, Divine Mother will touch his heart. But don't disclose our object in wanting him to go."

Sister agreed hopefully. Very early the next morning I was pleased to find that Roma and her husband were in readiness for the trip. As our hackney carriage rattled along Upper Circular

Road toward Dakshineswar, my brother-in-law, Satish Chandra Bose, amused himself by deriding the worth of gurus. I noticed that Roma was quietly weeping.

"Sister, cheer up!" I whispered. "Don't give your husband the satisfaction of believing that we take his mockery seriously."

"Mukunda, how can you admire worthless humbugs?" Satish was saying. "A sadhu's very appearance is repulsive. He is either as thin as a skeleton, or as unholily fat as an elephant!"

I shook with laughter — a reaction that annoyed Satish. He retired into sullen silence. As our cab entered the temple grounds in Dakshineswar, he grinned sarcastically.

"This excursion, I suppose, is a scheme to reform me?"

As I turned away without reply, he caught my arm. "Young Mr. Monk," he said, "don't forget to make proper arrangements with the temple authorities to provide for our noon meal." Satish wished to spare himself any conversation with priests.

"I am going to meditate now. Do not worry about your lunch," I replied sharply. "Divine Mother will look after it."

"I don't trust Divine Mother to do a single thing for me. But I do hold you responsible for my food." Satish's tones were threatening.

I proceeded alone to the portico that fronts the large temple of Kali (God in the aspect of Mother Nature). Selecting a shady spot near one of the pillars, I sat down and assumed the lotus posture. Although it was only about seven o'clock, the morning sun would soon be oppressive.

The world receded as I became devotionally entranced. My mind was concentrated on Goddess Kali. Her statue in this very temple in Dakshineswar had been the special object of adoration by the great master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. In answer to his anguished demands, the stone image had often taken a living form and conversed with him.

"Silent Mother of stone," I prayed, "Thou didst become filled with life at the plea of Thy beloved devotee Ramakrishna; why dost Thou not also heed the wails of this yearning son of Thine?"

My aspiring zeal increased boundlessly, accompanied by a divine peace. Yet, when five hours had passed, and the Goddess whom I was inwardly visualizing had made no response, I felt

slightly disheartened. Sometimes it is a test by God to delay the fulfillment of prayers. But He eventually appears to the persistent devotee in whatever form he holds dear. A devout Christian sees Jesus; a Hindu beholds Krishna, or the Goddess Kali, or an expanding Light if his worship takes an impersonal turn.

Reluctantly I opened my eyes, and saw that the temple doors were being locked by a priest, in conformance with a noon-hour custom. I rose from my secluded seat on the portico and stepped into the courtyard. Its stone surface was scorched by the midday sun; my bare feet were painfully burned.

"Divine Mother," I silently remonstrated, "Thou didst not come to me in vision, and now Thou art hidden in the temple behind closed doors. I wanted to offer a special prayer to Thee today on behalf of my brother-in-law."

My inward petition was instantly acknowledged. First, a delightful cold wave descended over my back and under my feet, banishing all discomfort. Then, to my amazement, the temple became greatly magnified. Its large door slowly opened, revealing the stone figure of Goddess Kali. Gradually the statue changed into a living form, smilingly nodding in greeting, thrilling me with joy indescribable. As if by a mystic syringe, the breath was withdrawn from my lungs; my body became very still, though not inert.

An ecstatic enlargement of consciousness followed. I could see clearly for several miles over the Ganges River to my left, and beyond the temple into the entire Dakshineswar precincts. The walls of all buildings glimmered transparently; through them I observed people walking to and fro over distant acres.

Though I was breathless and though my body remained in a strangely quiet state, I was able to move my hands and feet freely. For several minutes I experimented in closing and opening my eyes; in either state I saw distinctly the whole Dakshineswar panorama.

Spiritual sight, X-raylike, penetrates into all matter; the divine eye is centre everywhere, circumference nowhere. I realized anew, standing there in the sunny courtyard, that when man ceases to be a prodigal child of God, engrossed in a physical world indeed dream, baseless as a bubble, he reinherits his eternal realms. If escapism be a need of man, cramped in his narrow personality, can

any other escape compare with that of omnipresence?

In my sacred experience at Dakshineswar, the only extraordinarily enlarged objects were the temple and the form of the Goddess. Everything else appeared in its normal dimensions, although each was enclosed in a halo of mellow light — white, blue, and pastel rainbow hues. My body seemed to be of ethereal substance, ready to levitate. Fully conscious of my material surroundings, I was looking about me and taking a few steps without disturbing the continuity of the blissful vision.

Behind the temple walls I suddenly glimpsed my brother-in-law as he sat under the thorny branches of a sacred *bel* tree. I could effortlessly discern the course of his thoughts. Somewhat uplifted under the holy influence of Dakshineswar, his mind yet held unkind reflections about me. I turned directly to the gracious form of the Goddess.

"Divine Mother," I prayed, "wilt Thou not spiritually change my sister's husband?"

The beautiful figure, hitherto silent, spoke at last. "Thy wish is granted!"

I looked happily at Satish. As though instinctively aware that some spiritual power was at work, he rose resentfully from his seat on the ground. I saw him running behind the temple; he approached me, shaking his fist.

The all-embracing vision disappeared. No longer could I see the glorious Goddess; the temple lost its transparency and resumed its ordinary dimensions. Again my body sweltered under the fierce rays of the sun. I jumped to the shelter of the portico, to which Satish pursued me angrily. I looked at my watch. It was one o'clock; the divine vision had lasted an hour.

"You little fool," my brother-in-law blurted out, "you have been sitting there cross-legged and cross-eyed for hours. I have gone back and forth watching you. Where is our food? Now the temple is closed; you failed to notify the authorities about us; it is too late to arrange for our lunch!"

The exaltation I had felt in the Goddess's presence lingered with me. I exclaimed, "Divine Mother will feed us!"

"Once and for all," Satish shouted, "I would like to see your

Divine Mother giving us food here without prior arrangements!"

His words were hardly uttered when a temple priest crossed the courtyard and joined us.

"Son," he addressed me, "I have been observing your face serenely glowing during hours of meditation. I saw the arrival of your party this morning, and felt a desire to put aside ample food for your lunch. It is against the temple rules to feed those who do not make a request beforehand, but I have made an exception for you."

I thanked him, and gazed straight into Satish's eyes. He flushed with emotion, lowering his gaze in silent repentance. When we were served a lavish meal, including out-of-season mangoes, I noticed that my brother-in-law's appetite was meagre. He was bewildered, diving deep into the ocean of thought.

On the return journey to Calcutta, Satish, with softened expression, occasionally glanced at me pleadingly. But he did not speak a single word after the moment the priest, as though in answer to Satish's challenge, had appeared to invite us to lunch.

The following afternoon I visited my sister at her home. She greeted me affectionately.

"Dear brother," she cried, "what a miracle! Last evening my husband wept openly before me.

"Beloved Devi,"* he said, 'I am happy beyond expression that this reforming scheme of your brother's has wrought a transformation. I am going to undo every wrong I have done you. From tonight we will use our large bedroom only as a place of worship; your small meditation room shall be changed into our sleeping quarters. I am sincerely sorry that I have ridiculed your brother. For the shameful way I have been acting, I will punish myself by not talking to Mukunda until I have progressed in the spiritual path. Deeply I will seek the Divine Mother from now on; someday I must surely find Her!'

Years later (in 1936), I visited Satish in Delhi. I was overjoyed to perceive that he had developed highly in Self-realization and had been blessed by a vision of the Divine Mother. During my stay with him I noticed that Satish secretly spent the greater part of each night in deep meditation, though he was suffering from a serious

* Goddess, lit., "shining one"; from Sanskrit verb root *div*, to shine.

ailment, and was engaged during the day at his office.

The thought came to me that my brother-in-law's life span would not be a long one. Roma must have read my mind.

"Dear brother," she said, "I am well, and my husband is sick. Nevertheless, I want you to know that, as a devoted Hindu wife, I am going to be the first one to die.* It won't be long now before I pass on."

Taken aback at her ominous words, I yet realized their sting of truth. I was in America when my sister died, about eighteen months after her prediction. My youngest brother Bishnu later gave me the details.

"Roma and Satish were in Calcutta at the time of her death," Bishnu told me. "That morning she dressed herself in her bridal finery.

"Why this special costume?' Satish inquired.

"This is my last day of service to you on earth,' Roma replied. A short time later she had a heart attack. As her son was rushing out for aid, she said:

"Son, do not leave me. It is no use; I shall be gone before a doctor could arrive.' Ten minutes later, holding the feet of her husband in reverence, Roma consciously left her body, happily and without suffering.

"Satish became very reclusive after his wife's death," Bishnu continued. "One day he and I were looking at a photograph of a smiling Roma.

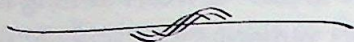
"Why do you smile?' Satish suddenly exclaimed, as though his wife were present. 'You think you were clever in arranging to go before me. I shall prove that you cannot long remain away from me; soon I shall join you.'

"Although at this time Satish had fully recovered from his sickness, and was enjoying excellent health, he died without apparent cause shortly after his strange remark before the photograph."

Thus prophetically passed both my beloved sister Roma and her husband Satish — he who had been transformed at Dakshineswar from an ordinary worldly man to a silent saint.

* A Hindu wife believes it is a sign of spiritual advancement if she dies before her husband, as proof of her loyal service to him, or "dying in harness."

I Receive My University Degree



"You ignore your textbook assignments in philosophy. No doubt you are depending on an unlaborious 'intuition' to get you through the examinations. But unless you apply yourself in a more scholarly manner, I shall see to it that you don't pass this course."

Professor D. C. Ghoshal of Serampore College was addressing me sternly. If I failed to pass his final written classroom test, I would be ineligible to take the conclusive examinations. These are formulated by the faculty of Calcutta University, which numbers Serampore College among its affiliated branches. In Indian universities a student who is unsuccessful in one subject in the A.B. finals must be examined anew in *all* his subjects the following year.

My instructors at Serampore College usually treated me with kindness, not untinged with amusement. "Mukunda is a bit overdrunk with religion." Thus summing me up, they tactfully spared me the embarrassment of trying to answer classroom questions; they trusted the final written tests to eliminate me from the list of A.B. candidates. The judgment passed by my fellow students was expressed in their nickname for me — "Mad Monk."

I took an ingenious step to nullify Professor Ghoshal's threat to me of failure in philosophy. When the results of the final test were about to be publicly announced, I asked a classmate to accompany me to the professor's study.

"Come along, I want a witness," I told my companion. "I shall

be very much disappointed if I have not succeeded in outwitting the instructor."

Professor Ghoshal shook his head after I had inquired what rating he had given my paper.

"You are not among those who have passed," he said in triumph. He searched through a large pile of sheets on his desk. "Your paper isn't here at all; you have failed, in any case, through non-appearance at the examination."

I chuckled. "Sir, I was there. May I look through the stack myself?"

The professor, nonplussed, gave his permission; I quickly found my paper, from which I had carefully omitted any identification mark except my roll-call number. Unwarned by the "red flag" of my name, the instructor had given a high rating to my answers even though they were unembellished by textbook quotations.*

Seeing through my trick, he now thundered, "Sheer brazen luck!" He added hopefully, "You are sure to fail in the A.B. finals."

For the tests in my other subjects, I received some coaching, particularly from my dear friend and cousin, Prabhas Chandra Ghosh, son of my Uncle Sarada. I staggered painfully but successfully—with the lowest possible passing marks—through all my final tests.

Now, after four years of college, I was eligible to sit for the A.B. examinations. Nevertheless, I hardly expected to avail myself of the privilege. The Serampore College finals were child's play compared to the stiff ones that would be set by Calcutta University for the A.B. degree. My almost daily visits to Sri Yukteswar had left me little time to enter the college halls. There my presence rather than my absence would cause my classmates to exclaim in surprise.

The routine I followed almost every day started with my setting out on a bicycle at nine-thirty in the morning. In one hand I would carry an offering for my guru—a few flowers from the garden of my

* I must do Professor Ghoshal the justice of admitting that the strained relations between us were not due to any fault of his, but solely to my absences from classes.

Professor Ghoshal is a remarkable orator with vast philosophical knowledge. In later years we came to a cordial understanding.

Panthi boardinghouse. Greeting me affably, Master would invite me to lunch. I invariably accepted with alacrity, glad to banish the thought of college for the day. After hours with Sri Yukteswar, listening to his incomparable flow of wisdom or helping with ashram duties, I would reluctantly depart around midnight for the Panthi. Occasionally I stayed all night with my guru, so happily engrossed in his conversation that I scarcely noticed when darkness changed into dawn.

One night about eleven o'clock, as I was putting on my shoes in preparation for the ride to the boardinghouse, Master questioned me gravely.

"When do your A.B. examinations start?"

"Five days hence, sir."

"I hope you are in readiness for them."

Transfixed with alarm, I held one shoe in the air. "Sir," I protested, "you know that my days have been passed with you rather than with the professors. How can I bring myself to enact a farce by appearing for those difficult finals?"

Sri Yukteswar's eyes were turned piercingly on mine. "You must appear." His tone was coldly peremptory. "We should not give cause for your father and other relatives to criticize your preference for ashram life. Just promise me that you will be present for the examinations; answer them the best way you can."

Uncontrollable tears were coursing down my face. I felt that Master's command was unreasonable and that his interest was, to say the least, belated.

"I will appear if you wish it," I said with a sob. "But no time remains for proper preparation." To myself I muttered, "In answer to the questions, I will fill up the sheets with your teachings!"

When I entered the hermitage the following day at my usual hour, I presented my bouquet mournfully to Sri Yukteswar. He laughed at my weebegone air.

"Mukunda, has the Lord ever failed you, at an examination or elsewhere?"

"No, sir," I responded warmly. Grateful memories came in a revivifying flood.

"Not laziness but burning zeal for God has prevented you from

seeking college honours," my guru said kindly. After a silence, he quoted, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' "*

For the thousandth time, I felt my burdens lifted in Master's presence. When we had finished our early lunch, he suggested that I return to the Panthi.

"Does your friend, Romesh Chandra Dutt, still live in your boardinghouse?"

"Yes, sir."

"Get in touch with him; the Lord will inspire him to help you with the examinations."

"Very well, sir; but Romesh is unusually busy. He is the honour man in our class, and carries a heavier course than the others."

Master waved aside my objections. "Romesh will find time for you. Now go."

I bicycled back to the Panthi. The first person I met in the boardinghouse compound was the scholarly Romesh. As though his days were quite free, he obligingly agreed to my diffident request.

"Of course! I am at your service." He spent many hours of that day and of each of the next few days in coaching me in my various subjects.

"I believe that many questions in the English literature examination will concern the route taken by Childe Harold," he told me. "We must get an atlas at once."

I hastened to the home of Uncle Sarada and borrowed an atlas. Romesh marked the European map at the places visited by Byron's romantic traveller.

A few classmates had gathered around to listen to the tutoring. "Romesh is advising you wrongly," one of them commented to me at the end of a session. "Usually only fifty percent of the questions are about the books; the other half involve the authors' lives."

When I sat for the examination in English literature, my first glance at the questions caused tears of gratitude to pour down my

* *Matthew 6:33* (Bible).

cheeks, wetting my paper. The classroom monitor came to my desk and made a sympathetic inquiry.

"My great guru foretold that Romesh would help me," I explained. "Look, the very questions suggested to me by Romesh are here on the examination sheet!" I added, "Fortunately for me, there are very few questions this year on British authors, whose lives are wrapped in deep mystery so far as I am concerned."

My boardinghouse was in an uproar when I returned. The boys who had been ridiculing me for my faith in Romesh's coaching now almost deafened me with congratulations. During the week of the examinations I continued to spend as much time as possible with Romesh, who formulated questions that he thought were likely to be set by the professors. Day by day, Romesh's questions appeared in almost the same words on the examination sheets.

The news was widely circulated in the college that something resembling a miracle was occurring and that success seemed probable for the absentminded "Mad Monk." I made no attempt to hide the facts of the case. The local professors were powerless to alter the questions, which had been arranged by the faculty of Calcutta University.

Thinking over the examination in English literature, I realized one morning that I had made a serious error. Certain questions had been divided into two parts: A or B, and C or D. Instead of considering one question in each part, I had answered *both* questions in the first section and had carelessly overlooked the second section. The best mark I could possibly score in that paper would be 33—three points less than the passing mark of 36.

I rushed to Master and poured out my troubles.

"Sir, I have made an unpardonable blunder. I don't deserve the divine blessings through Romesh; I am quite unworthy."

"Cheer up, Mukunda." Sri Yukteswar's tones were light and unconcerned. He pointed to the blue vault of the heavens. "It is more likely that the sun and moon will interchange their positions in space than that you will fail to get your degree!"

I left the hermitage in a more tranquil mood, though it seemed mathematically inconceivable that I could pass. I looked once or twice apprehensively into the sky; the Lord of Day appeared to be

secure in his customary orbit.

As I reached the Panthi, I overheard a classmate's remark: "I have just learned that this year, for the first time, the required passing mark in English literature has been lowered."

I entered the boy's room with such speed that he looked up in alarm. I questioned him eagerly.

"Long-haired monk," he said laughingly, "why this sudden interest in scholastic matters? Why cry in the eleventh hour? But it is true that the passing mark has just been lowered to 33 points."

A few joyous leaps took me to my own room, where I sank to my knees and praised the mathematical perfections of my Divine Father.

Each day I thrilled with the consciousness of a Spiritual Presence that I clearly felt to be guiding me through Romesh. A significant incident occurred in connection with my examination in the Bengali-language course. One morning Romesh, who had not coached me in that subject, called to me as I was leaving the boardinghouse on my way to the examination hall.

"There is Romesh shouting for you," a classmate said to me impatiently. "Don't return; we shall be late at the hall."

Ignoring the advice, I ran back to the house.

"Usually the Bengali examination is easily passed by our Bengali boys," Romesh said. "But I have just had a hunch that this year the professors have planned to 'massacre' the students by asking questions about the required-reading books." He then outlined two stories from the life of Vidyasagar, a renowned Bengali philanthropist of the nineteenth century.

I thanked Romesh and quickly bicycled to the hall. There I found that the examination sheet in Bengali contained two parts. The first instruction was: "Give two instances of the charities of Vidyasagar."* As I transferred to the paper the lore that I had so recently acquired, I whispered a few words of thanksgiving that I

* I have forgotten the exact wording of the instruction, but I remember that it concerned the stories Romesh had just told me about *Vidyasagar*. Because of his erudition Pundit Ishwar Chandra became widely known in Bengal simply by the title of *Vidyasagar* ("Ocean of Learning").

had heeded Romesh's last-minute summons. Had I been ignorant of Vidyasagar's benefactions (which now included one to me), I could not have passed the Bengali examination.

The second instruction on the sheet read: "Write an essay in Bengali on the life of the man who has most inspired you." Gentle reader, I need not inform you what man I chose for my theme. As I covered page after page with praise of my guru, I smiled to realize that my muttered prediction was coming true: "I will fill up the sheets with your teachings!"

I had not felt inclined to question Romesh about my course in philosophy. Trusting my long training under Sri Yukteswar, I safely disregarded the textbook explanations. The highest mark given to any of my papers was the one in philosophy. My score in all other subjects was just barely within the passing mark.

It is a pleasure to record that my unselfish friend Romesh received his own degree *cum laude*.

Father was wreathed in smiles at my graduation. "I hardly thought you would pass, Mukunda," he confessed. "You spend so much time with your guru." Master had indeed correctly detected the unspoken criticism of my father.

For years I had been uncertain that I would ever see the day when an A.B. could follow my name. I seldom use the title without reflecting that it was a divine gift, conferred on me for reasons somewhat obscure. Occasionally I hear college men remark that very little of their crammed knowledge remained with them after graduation. That admission consoles me a bit for my undoubted academic deficiencies.

On the day in June 1915 that I received my degree from Calcutta University, I knelt at my guru's feet and thanked him for all the blessings flowing from his life* into mine.

* The power of influencing others' minds and the course of events is a *vibhuti* (yogic power) mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* III:24, which explains it to be a result of "universal sympathy." [Two scholarly books on the *Sūtras* are *Yoga-System of Patanjali* (Vol. 17, Oriental Series, Harvard Univ.) and Dasgupta's *Yoga Philosophy* (Trubner's, London).]

All scriptures proclaim that the Lord created man in His omnipotent image. Control

"Get up, Mukunda," he said indulgently. "The Lord simply found it more convenient to make you a graduate than to rearrange the sun and moon!"

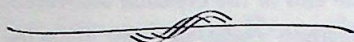
over the universe appears to be supernatural, but in truth such power is inherent and natural in everyone who attains "right remembrance" of his divine origin. Men of God-realization like Sri Yukteswar are devoid of the ego-principle (*abamkara*) and its uprisings of personal desires; the actions of true masters are in effortless conformity with *rita*, natural righteousness. In Emerson's words, all great ones become "not virtuous, but Virtue; then is the end of the creation answered, and God is well pleased."

Any man of divine realization could perform miracles, because, like Christ, he understands the subtle laws of creation; but not all masters choose to exercise phenomenal powers. (See p. 227 n.) Each saint reflects God in his own way; the expression of individuality is basic in a world where not two grains of sand are exactly alike.

Invariable rules may not be formulated about God-illuminated saints: some perform miracles, others do not; some are inactive, while others (like King Janaka of ancient India and St. Teresa of Avila) are concerned with large affairs; some teach, travel, and accept disciples, while others pass their lives as silently and unobtrusively as a shadow. No worldly critic can read the secret scroll of karma (past actions) that unrolls for each saint a different script.

CHAPTER 24

I Become a Monk of the Swami Order



"Master, my father has been anxious for me to accept an executive position with the Bengal-Nagpur Railway. But I have definitely refused it." I added hopefully, "Sir, will you not make me a monk of the Swami Order?" I looked pleadingly at my guru. During preceding years, in order to test the depth of my determination, he had refused this same request. Today, however, he smiled graciously.

"Very well, tomorrow I will initiate you into swamihood." He went on quietly, "I am happy that you have persisted in your desire to be a monk. Lahiri Mahasaya often said: 'If you don't invite God to be your summer Guest, He won't come in the winter of your life.'"

"Dear Master, I could never relinquish my wish to belong to the Swami Order like your revered self." I smiled at him with measureless affection.

"He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife."* I had analysed the lives of many of my friends who, after undergoing certain spiritual discipline, had then married. Launched on the sea of

* *1 Corinthians 7:32-33* (Bible).

worldly responsibilities, they had forgotten their resolutions to meditate deeply.

To allot the Lord a secondary place* in life was, to me, inconceivable. He is the sole Owner of the cosmos, silently showering man with gifts from life to life. There is but one gift man may offer in return—his love, which he is empowered to withhold or bestow.

In taking infinite pains to shroud with mystery His presence in the atoms of creation, the Creator could have had but one motive, one sensitive desire: that man seek Him only through free will. With what velvet glove of every humility has He not covered the iron hand of omnipotence!

The following day was one of the most memorable in my life. It was a sunny Thursday, I remember, in July 1915, a few weeks after my graduation from college. On the inner balcony of his Serampore hermitage, Master dipped a new piece of white silk into a dye of ochre, the traditional colour of the Swami Order. After the cloth had dried, my guru draped it around me as a renunciant's robe.

"Someday you will go to the West, where silk is preferred," he said. "As a symbol, I have chosen for you this silk material instead of the customary cotton."

In India, where monks embrace the ideal of poverty, a silk-clad swami is an unusual sight. Many yogis, however, wear garments of silk, which retains certain subtle bodily currents better than cotton.

"I am averse to ceremonies," Sri Yukteswar remarked. "I will make you a swami in the *bīḍwat* (non-ceremonious) manner."

The *bibīḍisa* or elaborate initiation into swamihood includes a fire ceremony, during which symbolical funeral rites are performed. The physical body of the disciple is represented as dead, cremated in the flame of wisdom. The newly made swami is then given a chant, such as: "This *atma* is Brahma"† or "Thou art That" or "I am He." Sri Yukteswar, however, with his love of simplicity, dispensed with all formal rites and merely asked me to select a new name.

* "He who offers God a second place offers Him no place."—*Ruskin*.

† Literally, "This soul is Spirit." The Supreme Spirit, the Uncreated, is wholly unconditioned (*neti, neti*, not this, not that) but is often referred to in *Vedānta* as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, that is, Being-Intelligence-Bliss.

Autobiography of a Yogi

"I will give you the privilege of choosing it yourself," he said, smiling.

"Yogananda,"* I replied after a moment's thought. The name means "bliss (*ananda*) through divine union (*yoga*)."

"Be it so. Forsaking your family name of Mukunda Lal Ghosh, henceforth you shall be called Yogananda of the Giri branch of the Swami Order."

As I knelt before Sri Yukteswar, and for the first time heard him pronounce my new name, my heart overflowed with gratitude. How lovingly and tirelessly had he laboured, that the boy Mukunda be someday transformed into the monk Yogananda! I joyfully sang a few verses from the long Sanskrit chant of Lord Shankara (Shankaracharya):†

Mind, nor intellect, nor ego, feeling;
 Sky nor earth nor metals am I.
 I am He, I am He, Blessed Spirit, I am He!
 No birth, no death, no caste have I;
 Father, mother, have I none.
 I am He, I am He, Blessed Spirit, I am He!
 Beyond the flights of fancy, formless am I,
 Permeating the limbs of all life;
 Bondage I do not fear; I am free, ever free,
 I am He, I am He, Blessed Spirit, I am He!

Every swami belongs to the monastic order that has been hon-

* Yogananda is a fairly common name among swamis.

† Shankara is often called Shankaracharya; *acharya* means "religious teacher." Shankara's date is a centre of the usual scholastic dispute. A few records indicate that the peerless monist lived in the sixth century B.C.; the sage Anandagiri gives the dates of 44-12 B.C.; Western historians assign Shankara to the eighth or early ninth century A.D. An affinity for many ages!

The late Jagadguru Sri Shankaracharya of the ancient Gowardhan Math in Puri, His Holiness Bharati Krishna Tirtha, visited America for three months in 1958. It was the first time any Shankaracharya had travelled to the West. His historic tour was sponsored by Self-Realization Fellowship and Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. The Jagadguru spoke before the leading universities of America and participated in a discussion on world peace with the eminent historian Dr. Arnold Toynbee.

In 1959 Sri Shankaracharya of Puri accepted the invitation of Sri Sri Daya Mata, President, to act as representative of the Gurus of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship in initiating into swamihood two Yogoda Satsanga

I Become a Monk of the Swami Order

oured in India from time immemorial. Reorganized in its present form centuries ago by Shankaracharya, it has since been headed by an unbroken line of venerable teachers (each of whom successively bears the title of Jagadguru Sri Shankaracharya). Many monks, perhaps a million, make up the Swami Order; to enter it they fulfill a requirement to receive initiation from men who themselves are swamis. All monks of the Swami Order thus trace their spiritual lineage to a common guru, Adi ("the first") Shankaracharya. They take vows of poverty (nonattachment to possessions), chastity, and obedience to the head or spiritual authority. In many ways the Catholic Christian monastic orders resemble the more ancient Order of Swamis.

To his new name a swami adds a word that indicates his formal connection with one of the ten subdivisions of the Swami Order. These *dasanamis* or ten agnomens include the *Giri* (mountain), to which Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri and hence I myself belong. Among the other branches are *Sagara* (sea), *Bharati* (land), *Puri* (tract), *Saraswati* (wisdom of Nature), *Tirtha* (place of pilgrimage), and *Aranya* (forest).

A swami's monastic name, which usually ends in *ananda* (supreme bliss), signifies his aspiration to attain emancipation through a particular path, state, or divine quality—love, wisdom, discrimination, devotion, service, yoga. His agnomen indicates harmony with Nature.

The ideal of selfless service to all mankind and of renunciation of personal ties and ambitions leads most swamis to engage actively in humanitarian and educational work in India or occasionally in foreign lands. Discarding prejudices of caste, creed, class, colour, sex, and race, a swami follows the precepts of human brotherhood. His goal is absolute unity with Spirit. Imbuing his waking and sleeping consciousness with the thought, "I am He," he roams contentedly, in the world but not of it. Thus only may he justify his title of *swami*: one who seeks to achieve union with the *Swa* or Self.

Sri Yukteswar was both a swami and a yogi. A swami, formally a monk by virtue of his connection with the venerable Order, is not

monks. He performed the ceremony in the Sri Yukteswar temple at Yogoda Satsanga Ashram in Puri. (*Publisher's Note*)

Autobiography of a Yogi

always a yogi. Anyone who practises a scientific technique for divine realization is a yogi. He may be either married or unmarried, either a man of worldly responsibilities or one of formal religious ties.

A swami may conceivably follow only the path of dry reasoning, of cold renunciation; but a yogi engages himself in a definite, step-by-step procedure by which the body and mind are disciplined and the soul gradually liberated. Taking nothing for granted on emotional grounds or by faith, a yogi practises a thoroughly tested series of exercises that were first mapped out by the ancient rishis. In every age of India, yoga has produced men who became truly free, true Yogi-Christis.

Like any other science, yoga is applicable by people of every clime and time. The theory advanced by certain ignorant writers that yoga is "dangerous" or "unsuitable" for Westerners is wholly false, and has lamentably deterred many sincere students from seeking its manifold blessings.

Yoga is a method for restraining the natural turbulence of thoughts, which otherwise impartially prevents all men, of all lands, from glimpsing their true nature of Spirit. Like the healing light of the sun, yoga is beneficial equally to men of the East and to men of the West. The thoughts of most persons are restless and capricious; a manifest need exists for yoga: the science of mind control.

The ancient rishi Patanjali* defines yoga as "neutralization of the alternating waves in consciousness."† His short and masterly work, *Yoga Sutras*, forms one of the six systems of Hindu philo-

* Patanjali's date is unknown, though many scholars assign him to the second century B.C. The rishis wrote treatises on a vast number of subjects with such insight that the ages have been powerless to outmode them; yet, to the subsequent consternation of historians, the sages made no effort to attach their own dates and stamp of personality to their literary works. They knew that their brief spans were only temporarily important as flashes of the great infinite Life; and that truth is timeless, impossible to trademark, and no private possession of their own.

† "*Chitta vritti nirodha*" (*Yoga Sutras* I:2), which may also be translated as "cessation of the modifications of the mind-stuff." *Chitta* is a comprehensive term for the thinking principle, which includes the pranic life forces, *manas* (mind or sense consciousness), *ahamkara* (egoity), and *buddhi* (intuitive intelligence). *Vritti* (literally "whirlpool") refers to the waves of thought and emotion that ceaselessly arise and subside in man's consciousness. *Nirodha* means neutralization, cessation, control.

sophy. In contradistinction to Western philosophies, all six Hindu systems* embody not only theoretical teachings but practical ones also. After pursuing every conceivable ontological inquiry, the Hindu systems formulate six definite disciplines aimed at the permanent removal of suffering and the attainment of timeless bliss.

The later *Upanishads* uphold the *Yoga Sūtras*, among the six systems, as containing the most efficacious methods for achieving direct perception of truth. Through the practical techniques of yoga, man leaves behind forever the barren realms of speculation and cognizes in experience the veritable Essence.

The Yoga system of Patanjali is known as the Eightfold Path.† The first steps are (1) *yama* (moral conduct), and (2) *niyama* (religious observances). *Yama* is fulfilled by noninjury to others, truthfulness, nonstealing, continence, and noncovetousness. The *niyama* prescripts are purity of body and mind, contentment in all circumstances, self-discipline, self-study (contemplation), and devotion to God and guru.

The next steps are (3) *asana* (right posture); the spinal column must be held straight, and the body firm in a comfortable position for meditation; (4) *pranayama* (control of *prana*, subtle life currents); and (5) *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses from external objects).

The last steps are forms of yoga proper: (6) *dharana* (concentration), holding the mind to one thought; (7) *dhyana* (meditation); and (8) *samadhi* (superconscious experience). This Eightfold Path of Yoga leads to the final goal of *Kaivalya* (Absoluteness), in which the yogi realizes the Truth beyond all intellectual apprehension.

"Which is greater," one may ask, "a swami or a yogi?" If and when oneness with God is achieved, the distinctions of the various paths disappear. The Bhagavad Gita, however, has pointed out that the methods of yoga are all-embracing. Its techniques are not

* The six orthodox (Vedas-based) systems are *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Vedānta*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Nyāya*, and *Vaiśeṣika*.

† Not to be confused with the "Noble Eightfold Path" of Buddhism, a guide to man's conduct, as follows: (1) right ideals, (2) right motive, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right means of livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right remembrance (of the Self), and (8) right realization (*samadhi*).

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A swami may conceivably follow only the path of dry reasoning, of cold renunciation; but a yogi engages himself in a definite, step-by-step procedure by which the body and mind are disciplined and the soul gradually liberated. Taking nothing for granted on emotional grounds or by faith, a yogi practises a thoroughly tested series of exercises that were first mapped out by the ancient rishis. In every age of India, yoga has produced men who became truly free, true Yogi-Christis.

Like any other science, yoga is applicable by people of every clime and time. The theory advanced by certain ignorant writers that yoga is "dangerous" or "unsuitable" for Westerners is wholly false, and has lamentably deterred many sincere students from seeking its manifold blessings.

Yoga is a method for restraining the natural turbulence of thoughts, which otherwise impartially prevents all men, of all lands, from glimpsing their true nature of Spirit. Like the healing light of the sun, yoga is beneficial equally to men of the East and to men of the West. The thoughts of most persons are restless and capricious; a manifest need exists for yoga: the science of mind control.

The ancient rishi Patanjali* defines yoga as "neutralization of the alternating waves in consciousness."† His short and masterly work, *Yoga Sutras*, forms one of the six systems of Hindu philo-

* Patanjali's date is unknown, though many scholars assign him to the second century B.C. The rishis wrote treatises on a vast number of subjects with such insight that the ages have been powerless to outmode them; yet, to the subsequent consternation of historians, the sages made no effort to attach their own dates and stamp of personality to their literary works. They knew that their brief spans were only temporarily important as flashes of the great infinite Life; and that truth is timeless, impossible to trademark, and no private possession of their own.

† "*Chitta vritti nirodha*" (*Yoga Sutras* I:2), which may also be translated as "cessation of the modifications of the mind-stuff." *Chitta* is a comprehensive term for the thinking principle, which includes the pranic life forces, *manas* (mind or sense consciousness), *ahamkara* (egoity), and *buddhi* (intuitive intelligence). *Vritti* (literally "whirlpool") refers to the waves of thought and emotion that ceaselessly arise and subside in man's consciousness. *Nirodha* means neutralization, cessation, control.

sophy. In contradistinction to Western philosophies, all six Hindu systems* embody not only theoretical teachings but practical ones also. After pursuing every conceivable ontological inquiry, the Hindu systems formulate six definite disciplines aimed at the permanent removal of suffering and the attainment of timeless bliss.

The later *Upanishads* uphold the *Yoga Sūtras*, among the six systems, as containing the most efficacious methods for achieving direct perception of truth. Through the practical techniques of yoga, man leaves behind forever the barren realms of speculation and cognizes in experience the veritable Essence.

The Yoga system of Patanjali is known as the Eightfold Path.† The first steps are (1) *yama* (moral conduct), and (2) *niyama* (religious observances). *Yama* is fulfilled by noninjury to others, truthfulness, nonstealing, continence, and noncovetousness. The *niyama* precepts are purity of body and mind, contentment in all circumstances, self-discipline, self-study (contemplation), and devotion to God and guru.

The next steps are (3) *āsana* (right posture); the spinal column must be held straight, and the body firm in a comfortable position for meditation; (4) *prāṇāyāma* (control of *prāṇa*, subtle life currents); and (5) *pratyāhara* (withdrawal of the senses from external objects).

The last steps are forms of yoga proper: (6) *dharana* (concentration), holding the mind to one thought; (7) *dhyāna* (meditation); and (8) *śamādhi* (superconscious experience). This Eightfold Path of Yoga leads to the final goal of *Kaivalya* (Absoluteness), in which the yogi realizes the Truth beyond all intellectual apprehension.

"Which is greater," one may ask, "a swami or a yogi?" If and when oneness with God is achieved, the distinctions of the various paths disappear. The Bhagavad Gita, however, has pointed out that the methods of yoga are all-embracing. Its techniques are not

* The six orthodox (Vedas-based) systems are *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Vedānta*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Nyāya*, and *Vaiśeṣika*.

† Not to be confused with the "Noble Eightfold Path" of Buddhism, a guide to man's conduct, as follows: (1) right ideals, (2) right motive, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right means of livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right remembrance (of the Self), and (8) right realization (*śamādhi*).

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meant only for certain types and temperaments, such as those few persons who incline toward the monastic life; yoga requires no formal allegiance. Because the yogic science satisfies a universal need, it has a natural universal appeal.

A true yogi may remain dutifully in the world; there he is like butter on water, and not like the unchurned, easily diluted milk of undisciplined humanity. Fulfilling one's earthly responsibilities need not separate man from God, provided he maintains mental un-involvement with egotistical desires and plays his part in life as a willing instrument of the Divine.

There are a number of great men, living today in American or European or other non-Hindu bodies, who, though they may never have heard the words *yogi* and *swami*, are yet true exemplars of those terms. Through their disinterested service to mankind, or through their mastery over passions and thoughts, or through their singlehearted love of God, or through their great powers of concentration, they are, in a sense, yogis; they have set themselves the goal of yoga—self-control. These men could rise to even greater heights if they were taught the definite science of yoga, which makes possible a more conscious direction of one's mind and life.

Yoga has been superficially misunderstood by certain Western writers, but its critics have never been its practitioners. Among many thoughtful tributes to yoga may be mentioned one by Dr. C. G. Jung, the famous Swiss psychologist.

"When a religious method recommends itself as 'scientific,' it can be certain of its public in the West. Yoga fulfills this expectation," Dr. Jung writes.* "Quite apart from the charm of the new and the fascination of the half-understood, there is good cause for Yoga to have many adherents. It offers the possibility of controllable experience and thus satisfies the scientific need for 'facts'; and, besides this, by reason of its breadth and depth, its venerable age, its doctrine and method, which include every phase of life, it promises undreamed-of possibilities.

* Dr. Jung attended the Indian Science Congress in 1937 and received an honorary degree from the University of Calcutta.

"Every religious or philosophical practice means a psychological discipline, that is, a method of mental hygiene. The manifold, purely bodily procedures of Yoga* also mean a physiological hygiene which is superior to ordinary gymnastics and breathing exercises, inasmuch as it is not merely mechanistic and scientific, but also philosophical; in its training of the parts of the body, it unites them with the whole of the spirit, as is quite clear, for instance, in the *Pranayama* exercises where *Prana* is both the breath and the universal dynamics of the cosmos....

"Yoga practice ... would be ineffectual without the concepts on which Yoga is based. It combines the bodily and the spiritual in an extraordinarily complete way.

"In the East, where these ideas and practices have developed, and where for several thousand years an unbroken tradition has created the necessary spiritual foundations, Yoga is, as I can readily believe, the perfect and appropriate method of fusing body and mind together so that they form a unity which is scarcely to be questioned. This unity creates a psychological disposition which makes possible intuitions that transcend consciousness."

The Western day is nearing when the inner science of self-control will be found as necessary as the outer conquest of Nature. The Atomic Age will see men's minds sobered and broadened by the now scientifically indisputable truth that matter is in reality a concentrate of energy. The human mind can and must liberate within itself energies greater than those within stones and metals, lest the material atomic giant, newly unleashed, turn on the world in mindless destruction. An indirect benefit of mankind's concern over atomic bombs may be an increased practical interest in the science of yoga,† a "bombproof shelter" truly.

* Dr. Jung is here referring to *Hatha Yoga*, a specialized branch of bodily postures and techniques for health and longevity. *Hatha* is useful, and produces spectacular physical results, but this branch of yoga is little used by yogis bent on spiritual liberation.

† Many uninformed persons speak of yoga as *Hatha Yoga* or consider yoga to be "magic," dark mysterious rites for attaining spectacular powers. When scholars, however, speak of yoga they mean the system expounded in *Yoga Sutras* (also known as

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Patanjali's Aphorisms): *Raja* ("royal") *Yoga*. The treatise embodies philosophic concepts of such grandeur as to have inspired commentaries by some of India's greatest thinkers, including the illumined master Sadasivendra (see page 382 n.).

Like the other five orthodox (Vedas-based) philosophical systems, *Yoga Sūtras* considers the "magic" of moral purity (the "ten commandments" of *yama* and *niyama*) to be the indispensable preliminary for sound philosophical investigation. This personal demand, not insisted on in the West, has bestowed lasting vitality on the six Indian disciplines. The cosmic order (*rita*) that upholds the universe is not different from the moral order that rules man's destiny. He who is unwilling to observe the universal moral precepts is not seriously determined to pursue truth.

Section III of *Yoga Sūtras* mentions various yogic miraculous powers (*vibhūtis* and *siddhis*). True knowledge is always power. The path of yoga is divided into four stages, each with its *vibhūti* expression. Achieving a certain power, the yogi knows that he has successfully passed the tests of one of the four stages. Emergence of the characteristic powers is evidence of the scientific structure of the yoga system, wherein delusive imaginations about one's "spiritual progress" are banished; proof is required!

Patanjali warns the devotee that unity with Spirit should be the sole goal, not the possession of *vibhūtis*—the merely incidental flowers along the sacred path. May the Eternal Giver be sought, not His phenomenal gifts! God does not reveal Himself to a seeker who is satisfied with any lesser attainment. The striving yogi is therefore careful not to exercise his phenomenal powers, lest they arouse false pride and distract him from entering the ultimate state of *Kaivalya*.

When the yogi has reached his Infinite Goal, he exercises the *vibhūtis*, or refrains from exercising them, just as he pleases. All his actions, miraculous or otherwise, are then performed without karmic involvement. The iron filings of karma are attracted only where a magnet of the personal ego still exists.

Brother Ananta and Sister Nalini



"Ananta cannot live; the sands of his karma for this life have run out."

These inexorable words reached my inner consciousness as I sat one morning in deep meditation. Shortly after I had entered the Swami Order, I paid a visit to my birthplace, Gorakhpur, as the guest of my elder brother Ananta. A sudden illness confined him to his bed; I nursed him lovingly.

The solemn inward pronouncement filled me with grief. I felt that I could not bear to remain longer in Gorakhpur, only to see my brother removed before my helpless gaze. Amidst uncomprehending criticism from my relatives, I left India on the first available boat. It cruised along Burma and the China Sea to Japan. I disembarked at Kobe, where I spent only a few days. My heart was too heavy for sight-seeing.

On the return trip to India, the boat touched at Shanghai. There Dr. Misra, the ship's physician, guided me to several curio shops, where I selected various presents for Sri Yukteswar and my family and friends. For Ananta I purchased a large carved bamboo piece. No sooner had the Chinese salesman handed me the bamboo souvenir than I dropped it on the floor, crying out, "I have bought this for my dear dead brother!"

A clear realization had swept over me that his soul was just being freed in the Infinite. The souvenir was sharply and symbolically

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cracked by its fall; amidst sobs, I wrote on the bamboo surface: "For my beloved Ananta, now gone."

My companion, the doctor, had been observing me with a sardonic smile.

"Save your tears," he remarked. "Why shed them until you are sure he is dead?"

When our boat reached Calcutta, Dr. Misra again accompanied me. My youngest brother Bishnu was waiting to greet me at the dock.

"I know Ananta has departed this life," I said to Bishnu, before he had had time to speak. "Please tell me, and the doctor here, when Ananta died."

Bishnu named the date, which was the very day that I had bought the souvenirs in Shanghai.

"Look here!" Dr. Misra ejaculated. "Don't let any word of this get around! The professors will be adding a year's study of mental telepathy to the medical course, which is already long enough!"

Father embraced me warmly as I entered our home. "You have come," he said tenderly. Two large tears dropped from his eyes. Ordinarily undemonstrative, he had never before shown me these external signs of affection. Outwardly the grave father, inwardly he possessed the melting heart of a mother. In all family affairs he played this dual parental role.

Soon after Ananta's passing, my younger sister Nalini was brought back from death's door by a divine healing. Before relating the story, I will refer to a few phases of our earlier life.

The childhood relationship between Nalini and me had not been of the happiest nature. I was very thin; she was thinner still. Through an unconscious motive that psychologists will have no difficulty in identifying, I would often tease my sister about her appearance. Her retorts would be equally imbued with the callous frankness of extreme youth. Sometimes Mother would intervene, temporarily ending the childish quarrels by a gentle box on my ear (as the elder ear).

After her school years were over Nalini was betrothed to Dr. Panchanon Bose, a likable young physician of Calcutta. Elaborate marriage rites were celebrated in due time. On the wedding night

I joined the large, jovial group of relatives in the living room of our Calcutta home. The bridegroom was leaning on an immense gold-brocaded pillow, with Nalini at his side. A gorgeous purple silk sari could not, alas, wholly hide her angularity. I sheltered myself behind the pillow of my new brother-in-law and grinned at him in friendly fashion. He had never seen Nalini until the day of the nuptial ceremony, when he finally learned what he was getting in the matrimonial lottery.

Feeling my sympathy, Dr. Bose pointed unobtrusively to Nalini, and whispered in my ear, "Say, what's this?"

"Why, Doctor," I replied, "it is a skeleton for your observation!"

As the years went on, Dr. Bose endeared himself to our family, who called on him whenever illness arose. He and I became fast friends, often joking together, usually with Nalini as our target.

"It is a medical curiosity," my brother-in-law remarked to me one day. "I have tried everything on your lean sister — cod-liver oil, butter, malt, honey, fish, meat, eggs, tonics. Still she fails to bulge even one-hundredth of an inch."

A few days later I visited the Bose home. My errand there took only a few minutes; I was leaving, unnoticed, I thought, by Nalini. As I reached the front door, I heard her voice, cordial but commanding.

"Brother, come here. You are not going to give me the slip this time. I want to talk with you."

I mounted the stairs to her room. To my surprise, she was in tears.

"Dear brother," she said, "let us bury the old hatchet. I see that your feet are now firmly set on the spiritual path. I want to become like you in every way." She added hopefully, "You are now robust in appearance; will you help me? My husband does not come near me, and I love him so dearly! But my chief desire is to progress in God-realization, even if I must remain thin and unattractive."

My heart was deeply touched at her plea. Our new friendship steadily progressed; one day she asked to become my disciple.

"Train me in any way you like. I put my trust in God instead of tonics." She gathered together an armful of medicines and poured them down a drain outside her window.

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As a test of her faith, I asked her to omit from her diet all fish, meat, and eggs.

After several months, during which Nalini had strictly followed the various rules I had outlined, and had adhered to her vegetarian diet in spite of numerous difficulties, I paid her a visit.

"Sis, you have been conscientiously observing the spiritual injunctions; your reward is near." I smiled mischievously. "How plump do you want to be? As fat as our aunt who hasn't seen her feet in years?"

"No! But I long to be as stout as you are."

I replied solemnly. "By the grace of God, as I have spoken truth always, I speak truly now.* Through the divine blessings, your body shall verily change from today; in one month it shall have the same weight as mine."

These words from my heart found fulfillment. In thirty days, Nalini's weight equalled mine. The new roundness gave her beauty; her husband fell deeply in love. Their marriage, begun so inauspiciously, turned out to be ideally happy.

On my return from Japan, I learned that during my absence Nalini had been stricken with typhoid fever. I rushed to her home, and was aghast to find her extremely emaciated. She was in a coma.

My brother-in-law told me, "Before her mind became confused by illness, she often said: 'If brother Mukunda were here, I would not be faring thus.' " He added tearfully, "The other doctors and I see no ray of hope. After her long bout with typhoid, blood dysentery has now set in."

* The Hindu scriptures declare that those who habitually speak the truth develop the power of materializing their words. What commands they utter from the heart come to pass. (*Yoga Sutras* II:36.)

Because the worlds are built on truth, all scriptures extol it as a virtue by which man may tune his life with the Infinite. Mahatma Gandhi often said: "Truth is God"; his lifelong striving was for perfect truth in thought, speech, and act. Throughout the ages the ideal of *satya* (truth) has permeated Hindu society. Marco Polo tells us that the *Brahmins* "would not utter a lie for anything on earth." An English judge in India, William Sleeman, says in his *Journey Through Oudh in 1849-50*: "I have had before me hundreds of cases in which a man's property, liberty, or life depended on his telling a lie; and he has refused to tell it."



SWAMI KEBALANANDA
Yoganandaji's beloved Sanskrit tutor



NAGENDRA NATH BHADURI
"The Levitating Saint"



MASTER MAHASAYA
"The Blissful Devotee"



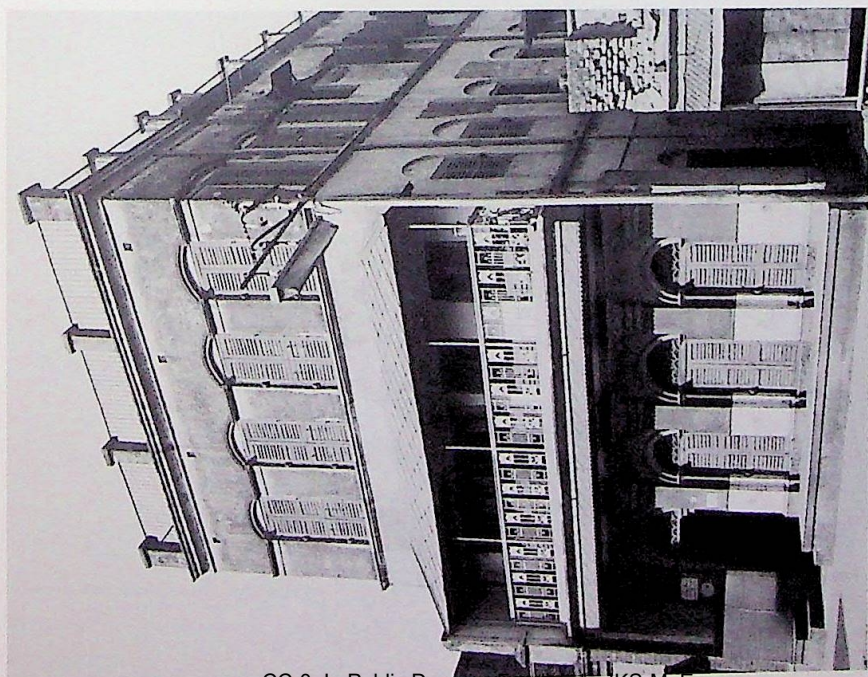
SWAMI PRANABANANDA
The Banaras "Saint with Two Bodies"



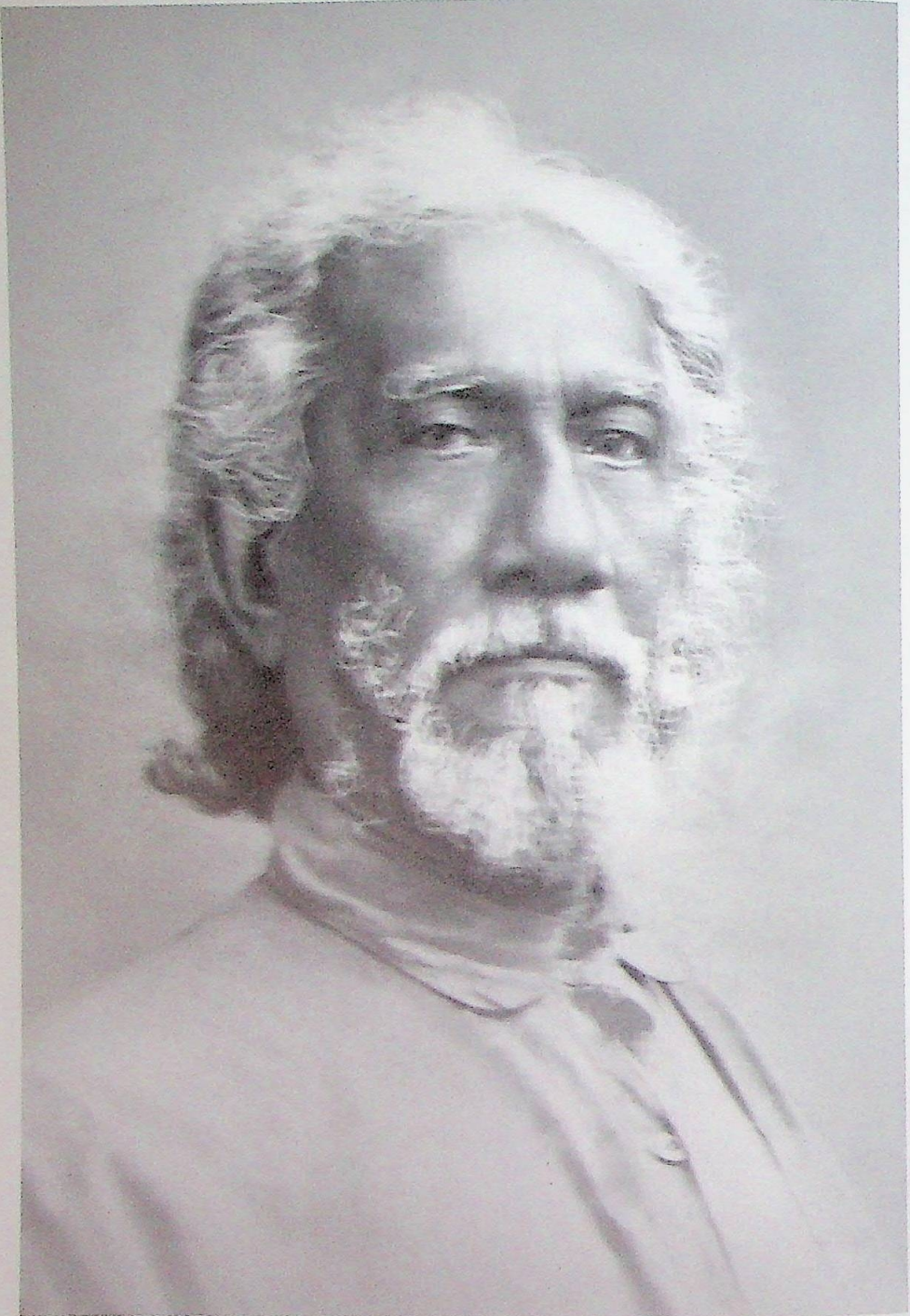
Sri Yogananda at the age of sixteen



Yoganandaji (*standing*) as a high-school youth, with his elder brother Ananta



Paramahansa Yogananda's family home at
Garpar Road, Calcutta



SRI SRI SWAMI SRI YUKTESWAR GIRI (1855 — 1936)

A Jnanavatar, "Incarnation of Wisdom"

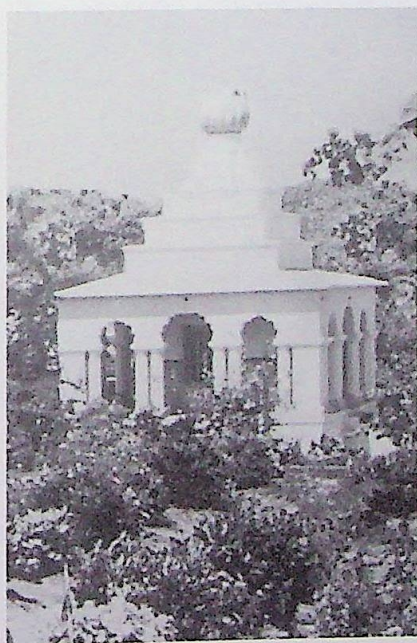
Disciple of Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya; Guru of Yoganandaji,
Paramguru of all YSS-SRF Kriya Yogis



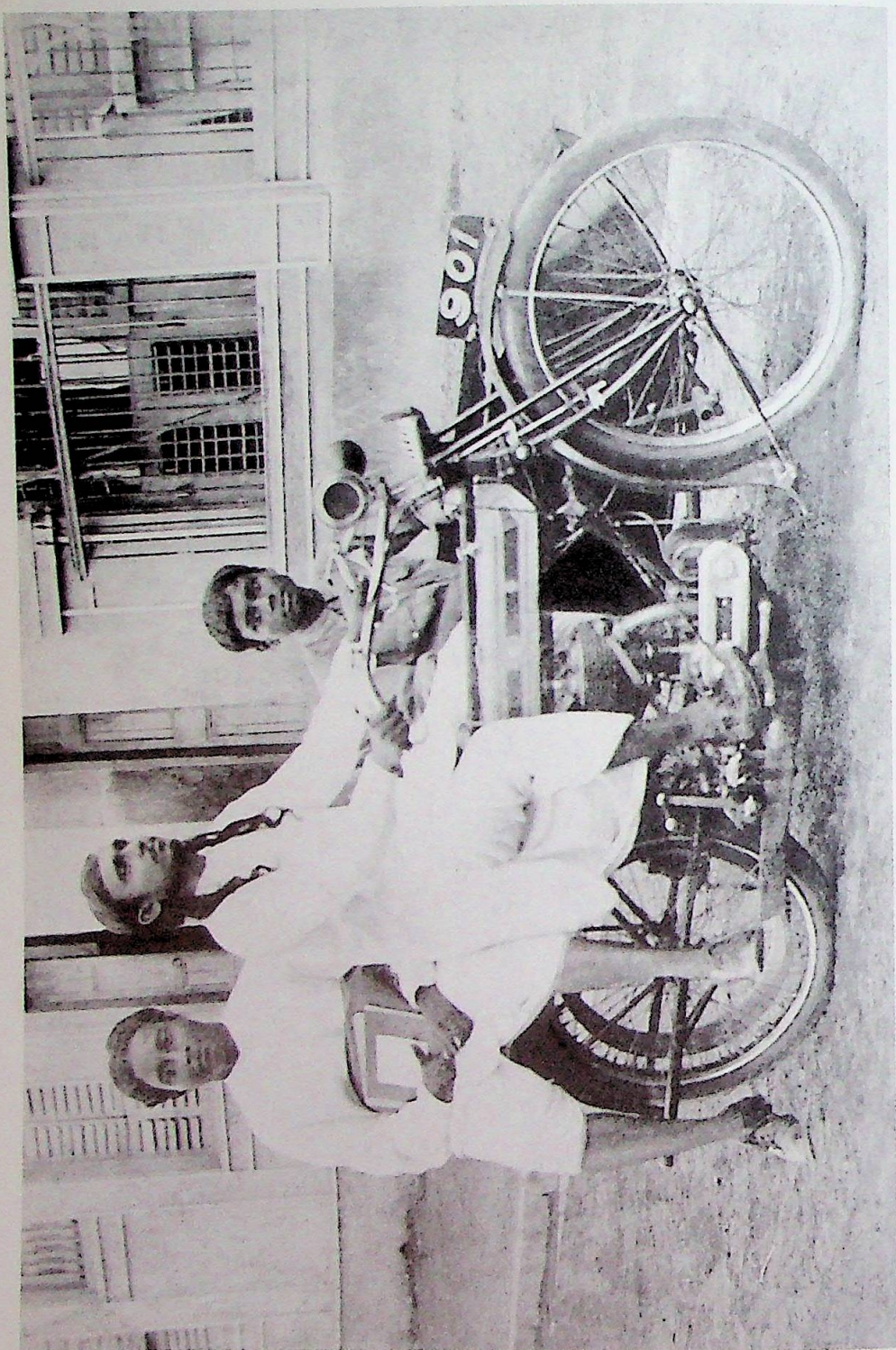
Swami Sri Yukteswar's seaside ashram, Puri



Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri in lotus posture



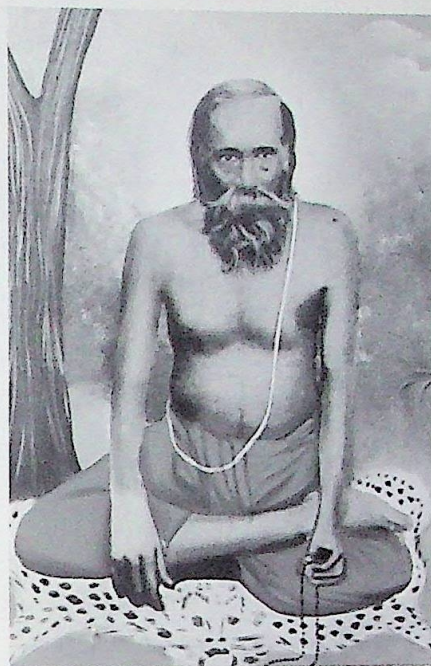
Swami Sri Yukteswar's
Samadhi Mandir, Puri



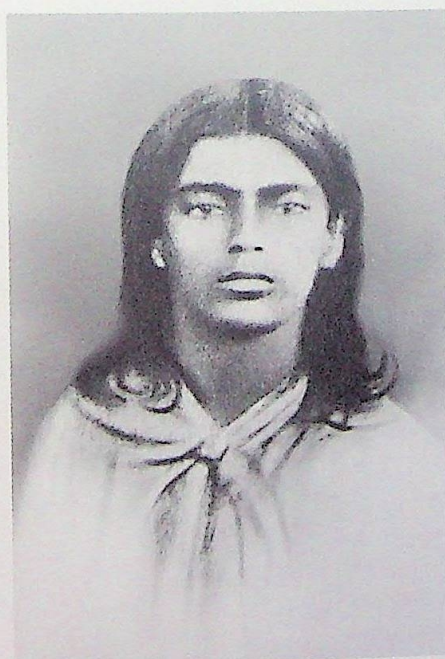
Yoganandaji in 1915, on back seat of motorcycle given by his father. "I rode everywhere on it," he said, "especially to visit my master, Sri Yukteswarji, in his Serampore hermitage."



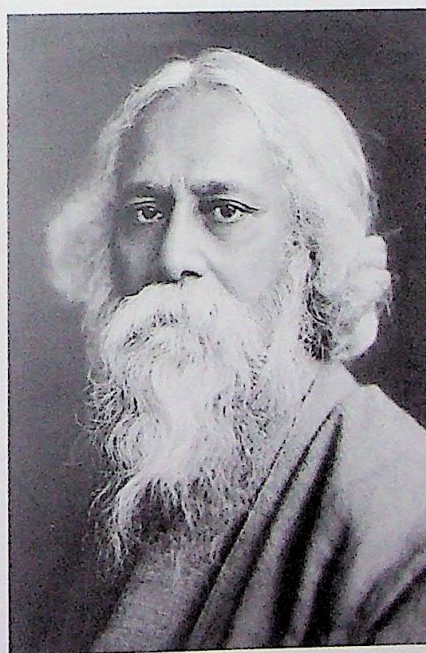
JAGADIS CHANDRA BOSE



RAM GOPAL MAZUMDAR
"The Sleepless Saint"



KASHI
Student at Ranchi School



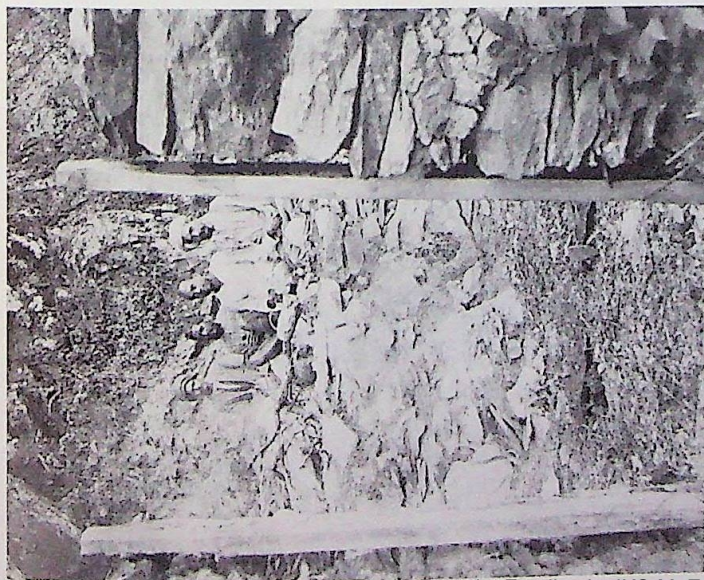
RABINDRANATH TAGORE



SRI SRI MAHAVATAR BABAJI
Guru of Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya

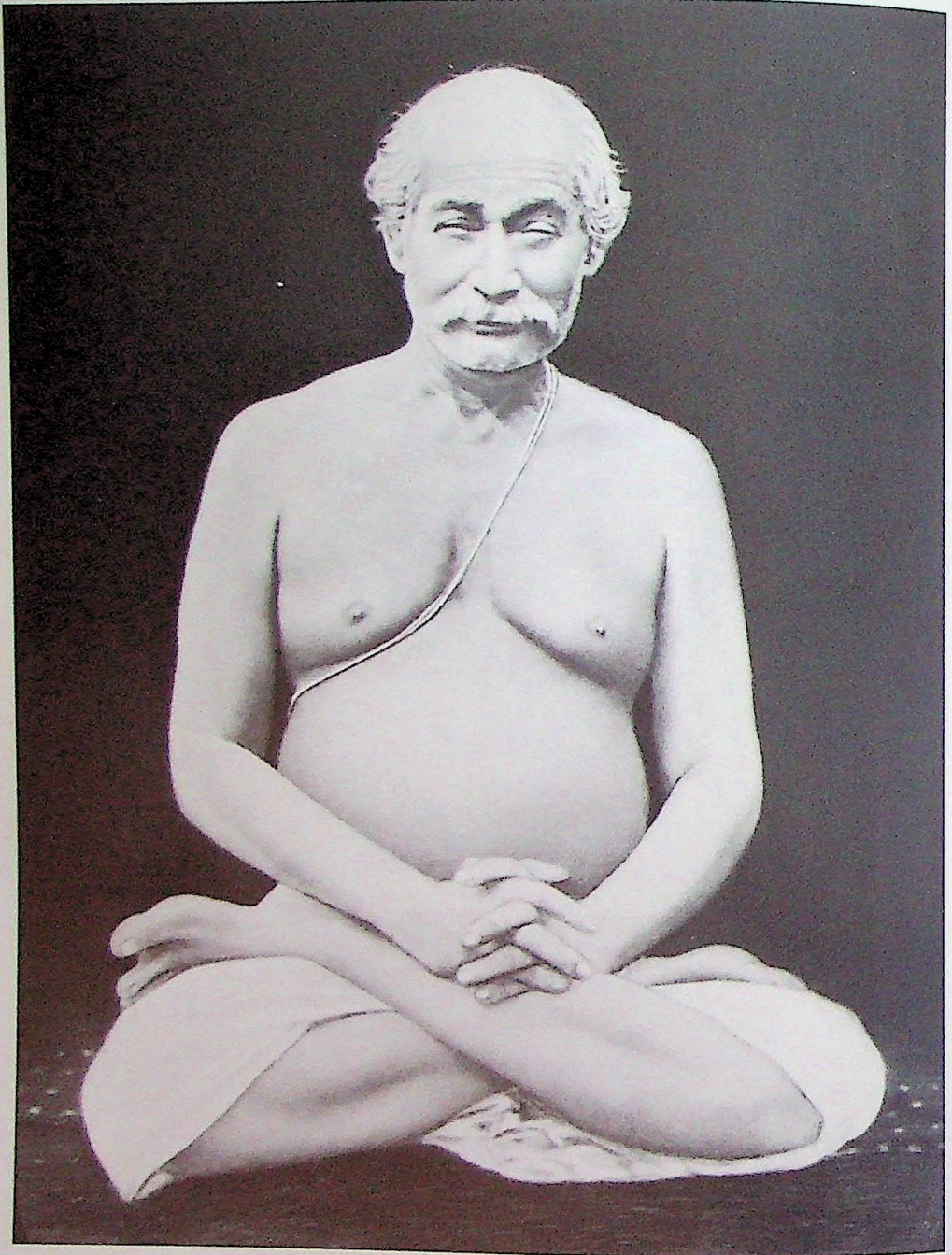
SRI SRI LAHIRI MAHASAYA

"I am Spirit. Can your camera reflect the Omnipresent Invisible?" After several unsuccessful exposures of the film on which no image of Lahiri Mahasaya could be captured, the Yogavatar finally permitted his "bodily temple" to be photographed. "The master never posed for another picture; at least, I have seen none," wrote Paramahansaji (See page 10).



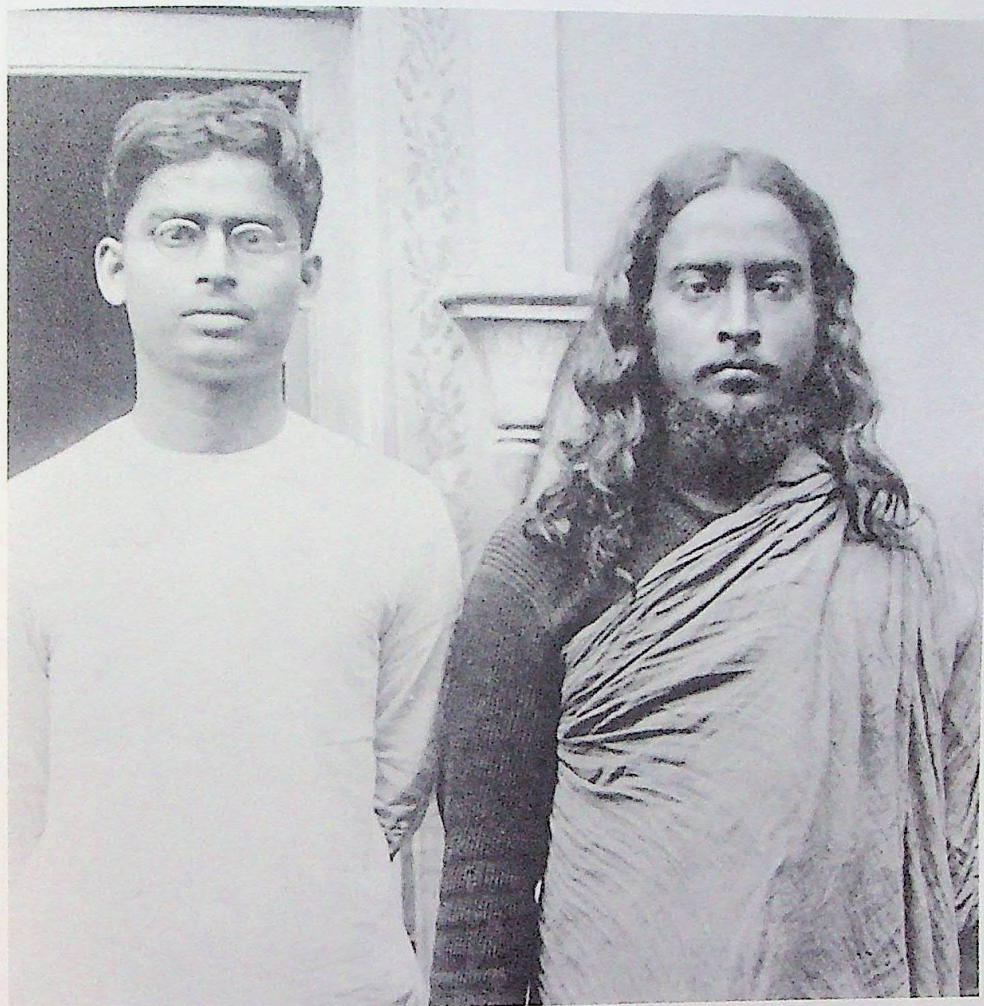
BABAJI'S CAVE IN THE HIMALAYAS

It was in this cave near Ranikhet that Lahiri Mahasaya met the secluded master, who initiated him in the science of Kriya Yoga. A grandson of Lahiri Mahasaya, Ananda Mohan Lahiri (*in white*), and three other devotees are visiting the sacred spot.

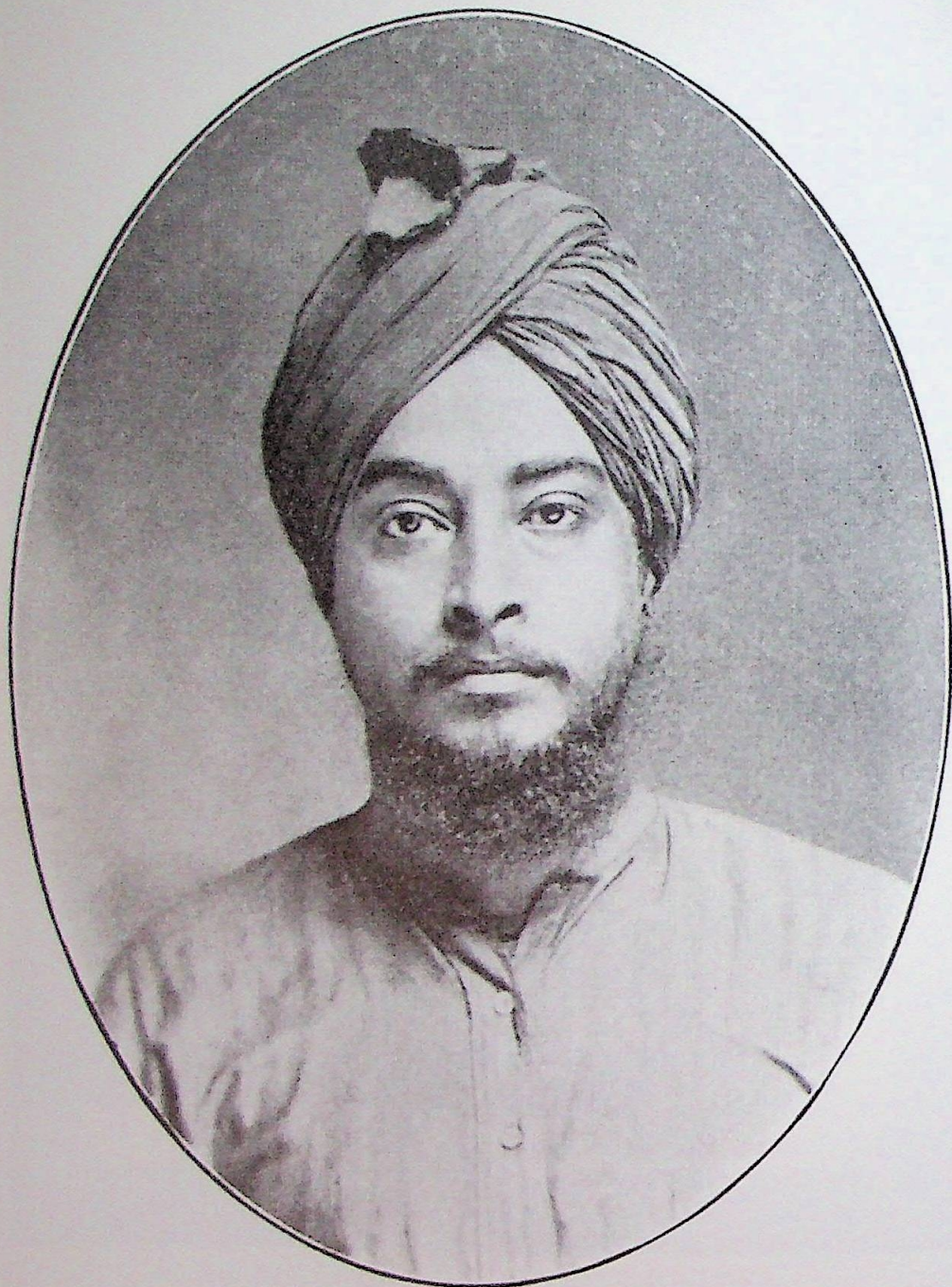


SRI SRI LAHIRI MAHASAYA (1828 — 1895)

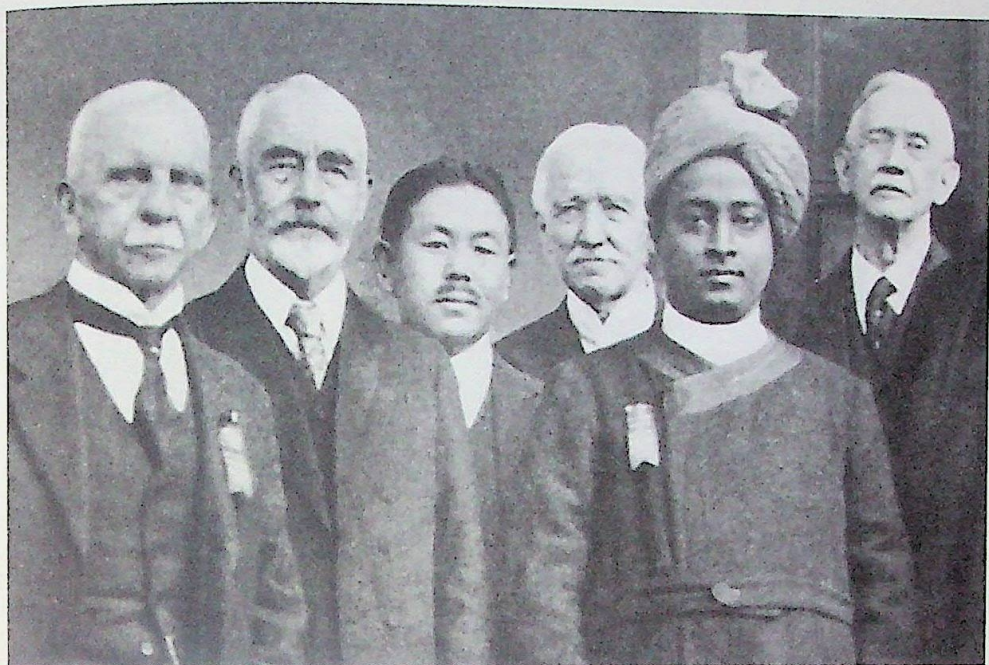
A Yogavatar, "Incarnation of Yoga"
Disciple of Mahavatar Babaji; Guru of
Sri Sri Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri



Prabhas Chandra Ghosh and Paramahansa Yogananda, Calcutta, December 1919. Sri Ghosh, a cousin and lifelong friend and disciple of Sri Yogananda's, was vice-president of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India for nearly forty years, until his passing in 1975.



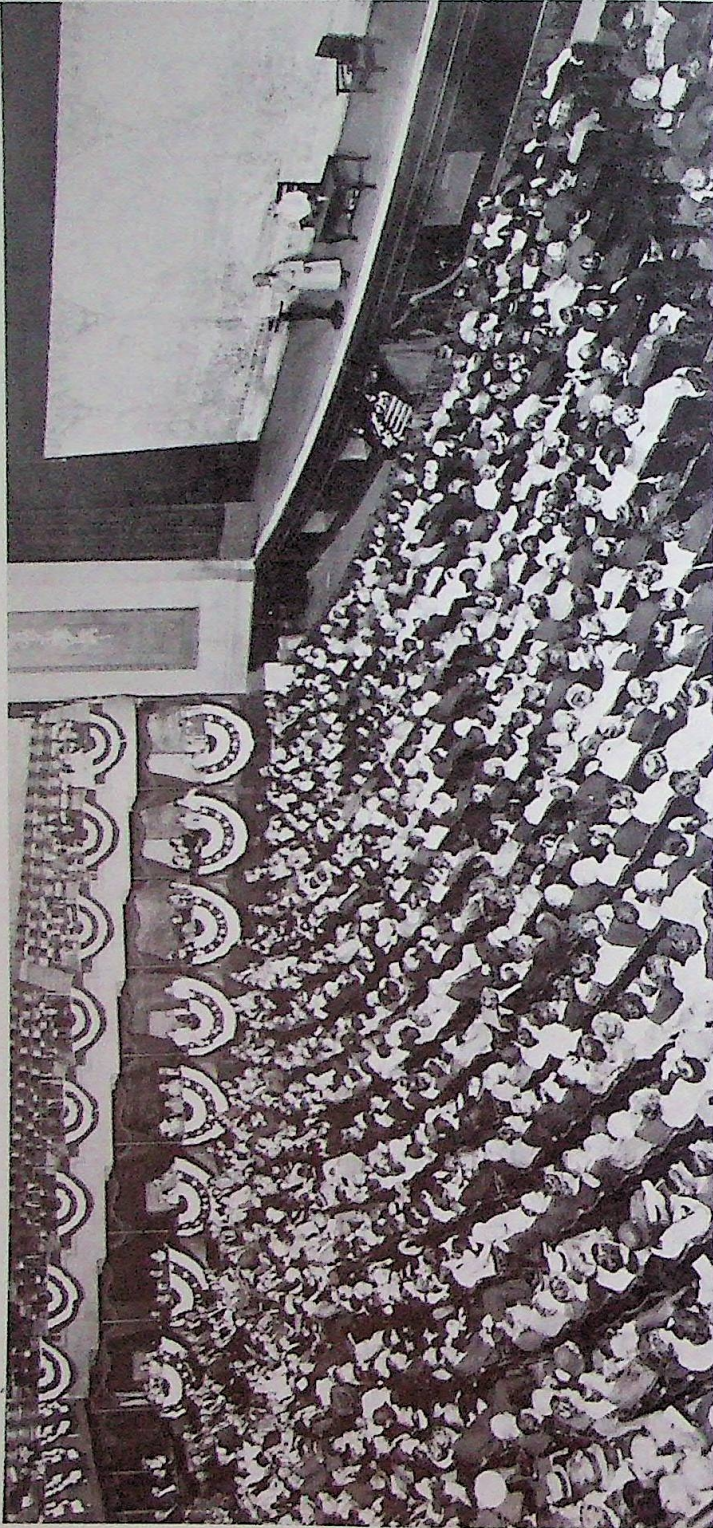
PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA
Passport picture taken in Calcutta , India, 1920



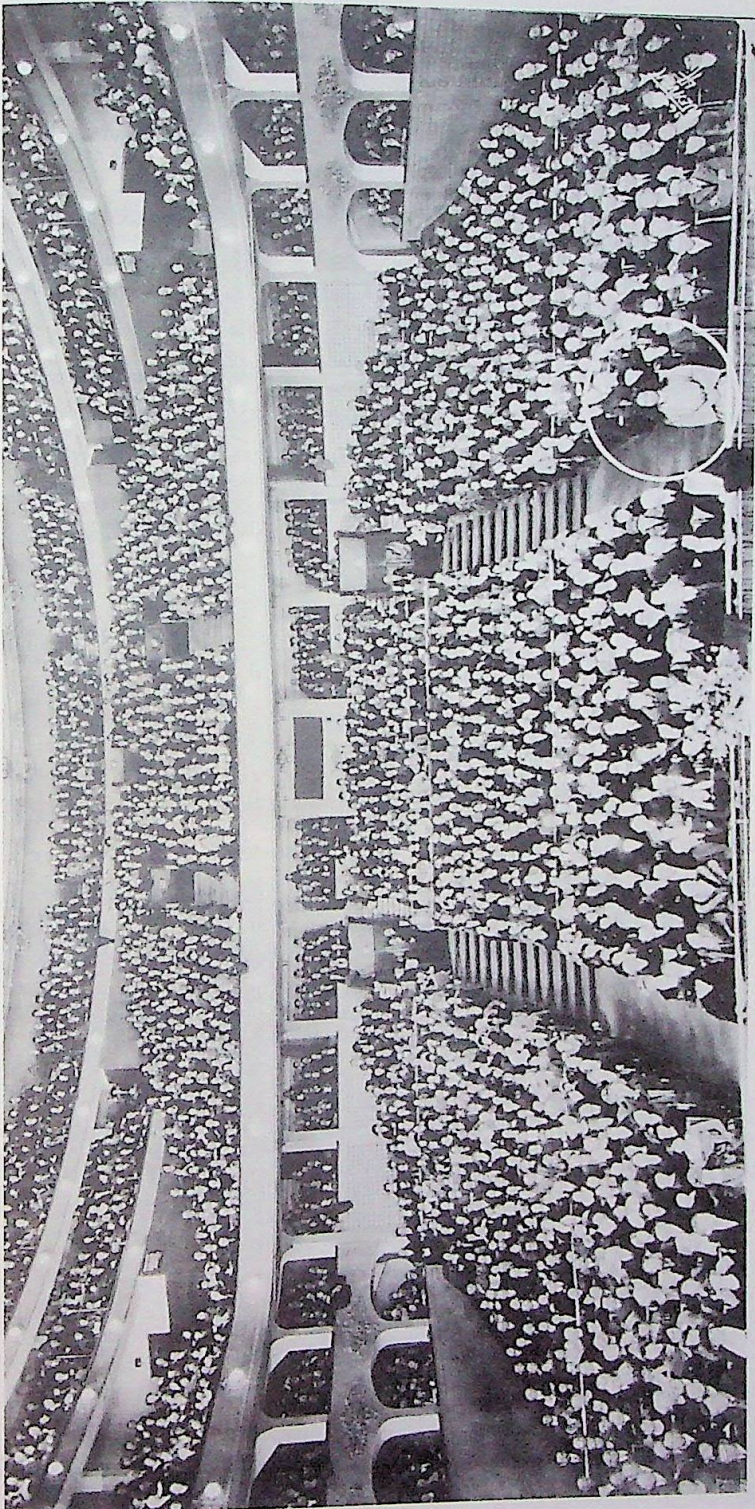
Paramahansa Yoganandaji with a few of the delegates to the International Congress of Religious Liberals, October 1920, Boston, USA, at which Yoganandaji gave his maiden speech in America.



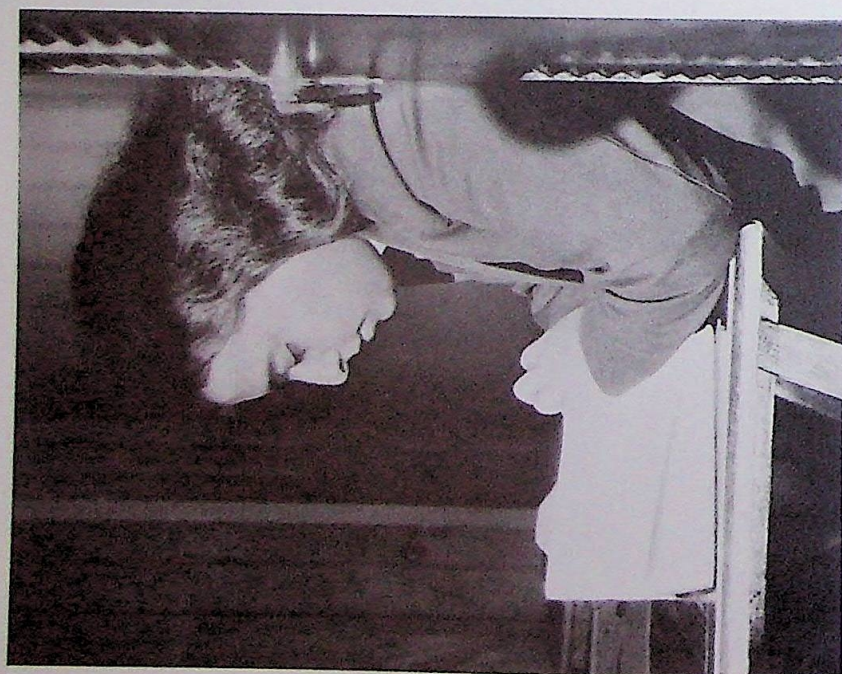
Luther Burbank and Yoganandaji, Santa Rosa, California, 1924



Yoganandaji on stage, conducting class in Denver, Colorado, USA, 1924.



Yoganandaji giving a lecture at the Philharmonic Auditorium, Los Angeles, California, 1925.



Yoganandaji in his cabin on a steamer en route to Alaska during transcontinental speaking tour, 1924



With the help of large-hearted students, Sri Yogananda purchased Mt. Washington Estates in 1925. Even before the transaction was completed, he held his first meeting, an Easter sunrise service, on the grounds of the soon-to-be world headquarters of his society.

I tried to move heaven and earth with my prayers. Engaging an Anglo-Indian nurse, who gave me full cooperation, I applied on my sister various yoga methods of healing. The blood dysentery vanished.

But Dr. Bose shook his head mournfully. "She simply has no more blood left to shed."

"She will recover," I replied stoutly. "In seven days her fever will be gone."

A week later I was thrilled to see Nalini open her eyes and gaze at me with loving recognition. From that day her recovery was swift. Although she regained her usual weight, she bore one sad scar of her nearly fatal illness: her legs were paralyzed. Indian and English specialists pronounced her a hopeless cripple.

The incessant war for her life that I had waged by prayer had exhausted me. I went to Serampore to ask Sri Yukteswar's help. His eyes expressed deep sympathy as I told him of Nalini's plight.

"Your sister's legs will be normal at the end of one month." He added, "Let her wear, next to her skin, a band with an unperforated two-carat pearl, held on by a clasp."

I prostrated myself at his feet with joyful relief.

"Sir, you are a master; your word that she will recover is enough. But if you insist I will immediately get her a pearl."

My guru nodded. "Yes, do that." He went on to describe correctly the physical and mental characteristics of Nalini, whom he had never seen.

"Sir," I inquired, "is this an astrological analysis? You do not know her birth day or hour."

Sri Yukteswar smiled. "There is a deeper astrology, not dependent on the testimony of calendars and clocks. Each man is a part of the Creator, or Cosmic Man; he has a heavenly body as well as one of earth. The human eye sees the physical form, but the inner eye penetrates more profoundly, even to the universal pattern of which each man is an integral and individual part."

I returned to Calcutta and purchased a pearl* for Nalini. A

* Pearls and other jewels as well as metals and plants, applied directly to the human

month later, her paralyzed legs were completely healed.

Sister asked me to convey her heartfelt gratitude to my guru. He listened to the message in silence. But as I was taking my leave, he made a pregnant comment:

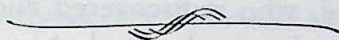
"Your sister has been told by many doctors that she can never bear children. Assure her that within a few years she will give birth to two daughters."

Some years later, to Nalini's joy, she bore a girl; and, in a few more years, another daughter.

skin, exercise an electromagnetic influence over the physical cells. Man's body contains carbon and various metallic elements that are present also in plants, metals, jewels. The discoveries of the rishis in these fields will doubtless receive confirmation someday from physiologists. Man's sensitive body, with its electrical life currents, is a centre of many mysteries as yet unexplored.

Though jewels and metal bangles have remedial values for the body, Swami Sri Yukteswar had another reason for recommending them. Masters never wish to appear as great healers: God alone is the Healer. Saints, therefore, often cloak with various disguises the powers they have humbly received from the Lord. Man usually puts his trust in tangibles; when persons came for healing to my guru, he advised them to wear a bangle or a jewel in order to arouse their faith and also to divert attention from himself. The bangles and jewels possessed, in addition to their intrinsic electromagnetic healing potencies, Master's hidden spiritual blessing.

The Science of Kriya Yoga



The science of *Kriya Yoga*, mentioned so often in these pages, became widely known in modern India through the instrumentality of Lahiri Mahasaya, my guru's guru. The Sanskrit root of *kriya* is *kri*, to do, to act and react; the same root is found in the word *karma*, the natural principle of cause and effect. *Kriya Yoga* is thus "union (*yoga*) with the Infinite through a certain action or rite (*kriya*)." A yogi who faithfully practises the technique is gradually freed from karma or the lawful chain of cause-effect equilibriums.

Because of certain ancient yogic injunctions, I may not give a full explanation of *Kriya Yoga* in a book intended for the general public. The actual technique should be learned from an authorized *Kriyaban* (*Kriya Yogi*) of Yogoda Satsanga Society/Self-Realization Fellowship.* Here a broad reference must suffice.

Kriya Yoga is a simple, psychophysiological method by which human blood is decarbonated and recharged with oxygen. The atoms of this extra oxygen are transmuted into life current to rejuvenate the brain and spinal centres. By stopping the accumulation of venous blood, the yogi is able to lessen or prevent

* Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda conferred on those who would succeed him as president and spiritual head of his society (Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship) the authority to bestow *Kriya Yoga* instruction and initiation on eligible students, or to appoint a Yogoda Satsanga Society swami to do so. He also provided for the perpetual dissemination of the *Kriya Yoga* science through his *Yogoda Satsanga Lessons*, available from Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. (see page 482). (*Publisher's Note*)

the decay of tissues. The advanced yogi transmutes his cells into energy. Elijah, Jesus, Kabir, and other prophets were past masters in the use of *Kriya* or a similar technique, by which they caused their bodies to materialize and dematerialize at will.

Kriya is an ancient science. Lahiri Mahasaya received it from his great guru, Babaji, who rediscovered and clarified the technique after it had been lost in the Dark Ages. Babaji renamed it, simply, *Kriya Yoga*.

"The *Kriya Yoga* that I am giving to the world through you in this nineteenth century," Babaji told Lahiri Mahasaya, "is a revival of the same science that Krishna gave millenniums ago to Arjuna; and that was later known to Patanjali and Christ, and to St. John, St. Paul, and other disciples."

Kriya Yoga is twice referred to by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. One stanza reads: "Offering the inhaling breath into the exhaling breath and offering the exhaling breath into the inhaling breath, the yogi neutralizes both breaths; thus he releases *prana* from the heart and brings life force under his control."* The interpretation is: "The yogi arrests decay in the body by securing an additional supply of *prana* (life force) through quieting the action of the lungs and heart; he also arrests mutations of growth in the body by control of *apana* (eliminating current). Thus neutralizing decay and growth, the yogi learns life-force control."

Another Gita stanza states: "That meditation-expert (*muni*) becomes eternally free who, seeking the Supreme Goal, is able to withdraw from external phenomena by fixing his gaze within the mid-spot of the eyebrows and by neutralizing the even currents of *prana* and *apana* [that flow] within the nostrils and lungs; and to control his sensory mind and intellect; and to banish desire, fear, and anger."†

Krishna also relates‡ that it was he, in a former incarnation,

* Bhagavad Gita IV:29.

† *Ibid.* V:27-28. See pp. 470, 472-473 for further explanations about the science of breath.

‡ *Ibid.* IV:1-2.

who communicated the indestructible yoga to an ancient illuminato, Vivasvat, who gave it to Manu, the great legislator.* He, in turn, instructed Ikshwaku, founder of India's solar warrior dynasty. Passing thus from one to another, the royal yoga was guarded by the rishis until the coming of the materialistic ages.† Then, because of priestly secrecy and man's indifference, the sacred lore gradually became inaccessible.

Kriya Yoga is mentioned twice by the ancient sage Patanjali, foremost exponent of yoga, who wrote: "*Kriya Yoga* consists of body discipline, mental control, and meditating on *Aum*."‡ Patanjali speaks of God as the actual Cosmic Sound of *Aum* that is heard in meditation.§ *Aum* is the Creative Word, the whirl of the Vibratory Motor, the witness** of Divine Presence. Even the beginner in yoga may soon hear the wondrous sound of *Aum*. Through this blissful spiritual encouragement, he becomes convinced that he is in communion with supernal realms.

Patanjali refers a second time to the *Kriya* technique or life-force control thus: "Liberation can be attained by that *pranayama*

* The antehistorical author of *Manava Dharma Shastra* or *Laws of Manu*. These institutes of canonized common law are effective in India to this day.

† The start of the materialistic ages, according to Hindu scriptural reckoning, was 3102 B.C. That year was the beginning of the last Descending *Dwapara Yuga* of the Equinoctial Cycle, and also the start of the *Kali Yuga* of the Universal Cycle (see pp. 166, 167 n.). Most anthropologists, believing that 10,000 years ago humanity was living in a barbarous Stone Age, summarily dismiss as "myths" the widespread traditions of very ancient civilizations in Lemuria, Atlantis, India, China, Japan, Egypt, Mexico, and many other lands.

‡ *Yoga Sutras* II:1. In using the words *Kriya Yoga*, Patanjali was referring either to the technique later taught by Babaji or to one very similar. That Patanjali was mentioning a definite technique of life-force control is proved by his aphorism in *Yoga Sutras* II:49 (cited on the following page).

§ *Ibid.* I:27.

** "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."—*Revelation* 3:14 (Bible). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him [the Word or *Aum*]; and without him was not any thing made that was made."—*John* 1:1–3 (Bible). *Aum* of the Vedas became the sacred word *Hum* of the Tibetans, *Amin* of the Moslems, and *Amen* of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians. Its meaning in Hebrew is *sure, faithful*.

which is accomplished by disjoining the course of inspiration and expiration."^{*}

St. Paul knew *Kriya Yoga*, or a similar technique, by which he could switch life currents to and from the senses. He was therefore able to say: "I protest by our rejoicing which I have in Christ, *I die daily*."† By a method of centering inwardly all bodily life force (which ordinarily is directed only outwardly, to the sensory world, thus lending it a seeming validity), St. Paul experienced daily a true yoga union with the "rejoicing" (bliss) of the Christ Consciousness. In that felicitous state he was conscious of being "dead" to or freed from sensory delusions, the world of *maya*.

In the initial states of God-communion (*sabikalpa samadhi*) the devotee's consciousness merges in the Cosmic Spirit; his life force is withdrawn from the body, which appears "dead," or motionless and rigid. The yogi is fully aware of his bodily condition of suspended animation. As he progresses to higher spiritual states (*nirbikalpa samadhi*), however, he communes with God without bodily fixation; and in his ordinary waking consciousness, even in the midst of exacting worldly duties.‡

"*Kriya Yoga* is an instrument through which human evolution can be quickened," Sri Yukteswar explained to his students. "The ancient yogis discovered that the secret of cosmic consciousness is intimately linked with breath mastery. This is India's unique and deathless contribution to the world's treasury of knowledge. The life force, which is ordinarily absorbed in maintaining heart action, must be freed for higher activities by a method of calming and stilling the ceaseless demands of the breath."

The *Kriya Yogi* mentally directs his life energy to revolve,

^{*} *Yoga Sūtras* II:49.

† *I Corinthians* 15:31 (Bible). "Our rejoicing" is the correct translation; not, as usually given, "your rejoicing." St. Paul was referring to the *universality* of the Christ Consciousness.

‡ The Sanskrit word *bikalpa* means "difference, nonidentity." *Sabikalpa* is the state of *samadhi* "with difference," *nirbikalpa* is the state "without difference." That is, in *sabikalpa samadhi* the devotee still retains a slight feeling of separateness from God; in *nirbikalpa samadhi* he realizes fully his identity as Spirit.

upward and downward, around the six spinal centres (medullary, cervical, dorsal, lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal plexuses), which correspond to the twelve astral signs of the zodiac, the symbolic Cosmic Man. One-half minute of revolution of energy around the sensitive spinal cord of man effects subtle progress in his evolution; that half-minute of *Kriya* equals one year of natural spiritual unfoldment.

The astral system of a human being, with six (twelve by polarity) inner constellations revolving around the sun of the omniscient spiritual eye, is interrelated with the physical sun and the twelve zodiacal signs. All men are thus affected by an inner and an outer universe. The ancient rishis discovered that man's earthly and heavenly environment, in a series of twelve-year cycles, push him forward on his natural path. The scriptures aver that man requires a million years of normal, diseaseless evolution to perfect his human brain and attain cosmic consciousness.

One thousand *Kriyas* practised in 8½ hours gives the yogi, in one day, the equivalent of one thousand years of natural evolution: 365,000 years of evolution in one year. In three years, a *Kriya Yogi* can thus accomplish by intelligent self-effort the same result that Nature brings to pass in a million years. The *Kriya* shortcut, of course, can be taken only by deeply developed yogis. With the guidance of a guru, such yogis have carefully prepared their body and brain to withstand the power generated by intensive practice.

The *Kriya* beginner employs his yogic technique only fourteen to twenty-four times, twice daily. A number of yogis achieve emancipation in six or twelve or twenty-four or forty-eight years. A yogi who dies before achieving full realization carries with him the good karma of his past *Kriya* effort; in his new life he is naturally propelled toward his Infinite Goal.

The body of the average man is like a fifty-watt lamp, which cannot accommodate the billion watts of power roused by an excessive practice of *Kriya*. Through gradual and regular increase of the simple and foolproof methods of *Kriya*, man's body becomes astrally transformed day by day, and is finally fitted to express the infinite potentials of cosmic energy, which constitutes the first materially active expression of Spirit.

Kriya Yoga has nothing in common with the unscientific breathing exercises taught by a number of misguided zealots. Attempts to hold breath forcibly in the lungs are unnatural and decidedly unpleasant. *Kriya* practice, on the other hand, is accompanied from the very beginning by feelings of peace and by soothing sensations of regenerative effect in the spine.

The ancient yogic technique converts the breath into mind-stuff. By spiritual advancement, one is able to cognize the breath as a mental concept, an act of mind: a dream breath.

Many illustrations could be given of the mathematical relationship between man's respiratory rate and the variations in his states of consciousness. A person whose attention is wholly engrossed, as in following some closely knit intellectual argument, or in attempting some delicate or difficult physical feat, automatically breathes very slowly. Fixity of attention depends on slow breathing; quick or uneven breaths are an inevitable accompaniment of harmful emotional states: fear, lust, anger. The restless monkey breathes at the rate of 32 times a minute, in contrast to man's average of 18 times. The elephant, tortoise, snake, and other creatures noted for their longevity have a respiratory rate that is less than man's. The giant tortoise, for instance, which may attain the age of three hundred years, breathes only 4 times a minute.

The rejuvenating effects of sleep are due to man's temporary unawareness of body and breathing. The sleeping man becomes a yogi; each night he unconsciously performs the yogic rite of releasing himself from bodily identification, and of merging the life force with healing currents in the main brain region and in the six sub-dynamos of his spinal centres. Unknowingly, the sleeper is thus recharged by the cosmic energy that sustains all life.

The voluntary yogi performs a simple, natural process consciously, not unconsciously like the slow-paced sleeper. The *Kriya Yogi* uses his technique to saturate and feed all his physical cells with undecayable light and thus to keep them in a spiritually magnetized condition. He scientifically makes breathing unnecessary, and does not enter (during his hours of practice) the negative states of sleep, unconsciousness, or death.

In men under *maya* or natural law, the flow of life energy is

toward the outward world; the currents are wasted and abused in the senses. The practice of *Kriya* reverses the flow; life force is mentally guided to the inner cosmos and becomes reunited with subtle spinal energies. By such reinforcement of life force, the yogi's body and brain cells are renewed by a spiritual elixir.

Through proper food, sunlight, and harmonious thoughts, men who are led only by Nature and her divine plan will achieve Self-realization in a million years. Twelve years of normal healthful living are required to effect even slight refinements in brain structure; a million solar returns are exacted to purify the cerebral tenement sufficiently for manifestation of cosmic consciousness. A *Kriya Yogi*, however, by use of a spiritual science removes himself from the necessity for a long period of careful observance of natural laws.

Untying the cord of breath that binds the soul to the body, *Kriya* serves to prolong life and to enlarge the consciousness to infinity. The yoga technique overcomes the tug-of-war between the mind and the matter-entangled senses, and frees the devotee to reinherit his eternal kingdom. He knows then that his real being is bound neither by physical encasement nor by breath—symbol of mortal man's enslavement to air, to Nature's elemental compulsions.

Master of his body and mind, the *Kriya Yogi* ultimately achieves victory over the "last enemy,"* Death.

So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men:
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.†

Introspection, or "sitting in the silence," is an unscientific way of trying to force apart the mind and senses, tied together by the life force. The contemplative mind, attempting its return to divinity, is

* "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (*I Corinthians*, 15:26 Bible). The incorruptibility of Paramahansa Yogananda's body after death (see page 478) proved him a perfected *Kriya Yogi*. Not all great masters, however, manifest bodily nondecay after death. (See page 304 n.) Such miracles occur, the Hindu scriptures tell us, only for some special purpose. In Paramahansa's case, the "special purpose" was doubtless to convince the West of the value of yoga. Yoganandaji had been commanded by Babaji and Sri Yukteswarji to serve the West; Paramahansa fulfilled that trust both in his life and in his death. (*Publisher's Note*)

† Shakespeare: *Sonnet* 146.

constantly dragged back toward the senses by the life currents. *Kriya*, controlling the mind *directly* through the life force, is the easiest, most effective, and most scientific avenue of approach to the Infinite. In contrast to the slow, uncertain "bullock cart" theological path to God, *Kriya Yoga* may justly be called the "airplane" route.

The yogic science is based on an empirical consideration of all forms of concentration and meditation techniques. Yoga enables the devotee to switch off or on, at will, life current to the five sense telephones of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Attaining this power of sense disconnection, the yogi finds it simple to unite his mind at will with divine realms or with the world of matter. No longer is he unwillingly brought back by the life force to the mundane sphere of rowdy sensations and restless thoughts.

The life of an advanced *Kriya Yogi* is influenced, not by effects of past actions, but solely by directions from the soul. The devotee thus avoids the slow, evolutionary monitors of egoistic actions, good and bad, of common life—cumbrous and snail-like to the eagle hearts.

The superior method of soul living frees the yogi; emerging from his ego-prison, he tastes the deep air of omnipresence. The thralldom of natural living is, in contrast, set in a pace humiliating. Conforming his life merely to the evolutionary order, a man can command no concessionary haste from Nature. Though he live without error against the laws that govern his body and mind, he still requires a million years of masquerading incarnations to attain final emancipation.

The telescopic methods of a yogi, disengaging himself from physical and mental identifications in favour of soul individuality, are therefore commended to those who eye with revolt a thousand thousand years. This numerical periphery is enlarged for the ordinary man, who lives in harmony not even with Nature, let alone his soul; pursuing instead unnatural complexities and offending in his thoughts and body the sweet sanities of Nature. For him, two times a million years can scarce suffice for liberation.

Gross man seldom or never realizes that his body is a kingdom, governed by Emperor Soul on the throne of the cranium, with

The Science of Kriya Yoga

subsidiary regents in the six spinal centres or spheres of consciousness. This theocracy extends over a throng of obedient subjects: twenty-seven thousand billion cells (endowed with sure if seemingly automatic intelligence by which they perform all duties of bodily growths, transformations, and dissolutions) and fifty million substratal thoughts, emotions, and variations of alternating phases in man's consciousness in an average life of sixty years.

Any apparent insurrection in the human body or mind against Emperor Soul, manifesting as disease or irrationality, is due to no disloyalty among the humble subjects, but stems from past or present misuse by man of his individuality or free will—given to him simultaneously with a soul, and revocable never.

Identifying himself with a shallow ego, man takes for granted that it is he who thinks, wills, feels, digests meals, and keeps himself alive, never admitting through reflection (only a little would suffice) that in his ordinary life he is naught but a puppet of past actions (karma) and of Nature or environment. Each man's intellectual reactions, feelings, moods, and habits are merely effects of past causes, whether of this or a prior life. Lofty above such influences, however, is his regal soul. Spurning the transitory truths and freedoms, the *Kriya Yogi* passes beyond all disillusionment into his unfettered Being. The world's scriptures declare man to be not a corruptible body but a living soul; in *Kriya Yoga* he finds a method to prove the scriptural affirmation.

"Outward ritual cannot destroy ignorance, because they are not mutually contradictory," wrote Shankara in his famous *Century of Verses*. "Realised knowledge alone destroys ignorance.... Knowledge cannot spring up by any other means than inquiry. 'Who am I? How was this universe born? Who is its maker? What is its material cause?' This is the kind of inquiry referred to." The intellect has no answer for these questions; hence the rishis evolved yoga as the technique of spiritual inquiry.

The true yogi, withholding his thoughts, will, and feelings from false identification with bodily desires, uniting his mind with superconscious forces in the spinal shrines, thus lives in the world as God hath planned; he is impelled neither by impulses from the past nor by fresh motivations of human witlessness. Receiving

fulfillment of his Supreme Desire, he is safe in the final haven of inexhaustibly blissful Spirit.

Referring to the sure and methodical efficacy of yoga, Krishna praises the technological yogi in the following words: "The yogi is greater than body-disciplining ascetics, greater even than the followers of the path of wisdom (*Jnana Yoga*), or of the path of action (*Karma Yoga*); be thou, O disciple Arjuna, a yogi!"*

Kriya Yoga is the real "fire rite" oft extolled in the Gita. The yogi casts his human longings into a monotheistic bonfire consecrated to the unparalleled God. This is indeed the true yogic fire ceremony, in which all past and present desires are fuel consumed by love divine. The Ultimate Flame receives the sacrifice of all human madness, and man is pure of dross. His metaphorical bones stripped of all desirous flesh, his karmic skeleton bleached by the antiseptic sun of wisdom, inoffensive before man and Maker, he is clean at last.

* Bhagavad Gita VI:46.

Modern science is beginning to discover the truly extraordinary curative and rejuvenating effects, on body and mind, of non-breathing. Dr. Alvan L. Barach of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York has originated a local lung-rest therapy that is restoring to health many tuberculosis sufferers. The use of an equalizing pressure chamber enables the patient to stop breathing. *The New York Times* of Feb. 1, 1947, quoted Dr. Barach as follows: "The effect of cessation of breathing on the central nervous system is of considerable interest. The impulse for movement of the voluntary muscles in the extremities is strikingly diminished. The patient may lie in the chamber for hours without moving his hands or changing position. The desire to smoke disappears when voluntary respiration stops, even in patients who have been accustomed to smoke two packages of cigarettes daily. In many instances the relaxation is of such a nature that the patient does not require amusement." In 1951 Dr. Barach publicly confirmed the value of the treatment, which, he said, "not only rests the lungs but also the entire body, and, seemingly, the mind. The heart, for example, has its work decreased by a third. Our subjects stop worrying. None feel bored."

From these facts, one begins to understand how it is possible for yogis to sit motionless for long periods without mental or bodily urge toward restless activity. Only by such quietude may the soul find its way back to God. Though ordinary men must remain in an equalizing pressure chamber to obtain certain benefits of non-breathing, the yogi needs nothing but the *Kriya Yoga* technique to receive rewards in body and mind, and in soul-awareness.

Founding a Yoga School in Ranchi



"Why are you averse to organizational work?"

Master's question startled me a bit. It is true that my private conviction at the time was that organizations are "hornets' nests."

"It is a thankless task, sir," I answered. "No matter what the leader does, or does not do, he is criticized."

"Do you want the whole divine *channa* (milk curd) for yourself alone?" My guru's retort was accompanied by a stern glance. "Could you or anyone else achieve God-communion through yoga if a line of generous-hearted masters had not been willing to convey their knowledge to others?" He added, "God is the Honey, organizations are the hives; both are necessary. Any *form* is useless, of course, without the spirit, but why should you not start busy hives full of the spiritual nectar?"

His counsel moved me deeply. Although I made no outward reply, an adamant resolution arose in my breast: I would share with my fellows, so far as lay in my power, the unshackling truths I had learned at my guru's feet. "Lord," I prayed, "may Thy love shine forever on the sanctuary of my devotion, and may I be able to awaken Thy love in all hearts."

On a previous occasion, before I had joined the monastic order, Sri Yukteswar had made a most unexpected remark.

"How you will miss the companionship of a wife in your old age!" he had said. "Do you not agree that the family man, engaged

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in useful work to maintain his wife and children, thus plays a rewarding role in God's eyes?"

"Sir," I had protested in alarm, "you know that my desire in this life is only for the Cosmic Beloved."

Master had laughed so merrily that I understood his words had been uttered merely to test me.

"Remember," he had said slowly, "that he who rejects the usual worldly duties can justify himself only by assuming some kind of responsibility for a much larger family."

The ideal of right education for youth had always been very close to my heart. I saw clearly the arid results of ordinary instruction, aimed at the development of body and intellect only. Moral and spiritual values, without whose appreciation no man can approach happiness, were yet lacking in the formal curriculum. I determined to found a school where young boys could develop to the full stature of manhood. My first step in that direction was made with seven children at Dihika, a small country site in Bengal.

A year later, in 1918, through the generosity of Sir Manindra Chandra Nundy, the Maharaja of Kasimbazar, I was able to transfer my fast-growing group to Ranchi. This town in Bihar, about two hundred miles from Calcutta, is blessed with one of the most healthful climates in India. The Kasimbazar Palace in Ranchi became the main building of the new school, which I called "Yogoda Satsanga Brahmacharya Vidyalaya."*

I organized a programme for both grammar- and high-school grades. It includes agricultural, industrial, commercial, and academic subjects. Following the educational ideals of the rishis (whose forest ashrams had been the ancient seats of learning, both

* *Vidyalaya*, school. *Brahmacharya* here refers to one of the four stages in the Vedic plan for man's life, as comprising that of (1) the celibate student (*brahmachari*); (2) the householder with worldly responsibilities (*grihastha*); (3) the hermit (*vanaprastha*); (4) the forest dweller or wanderer, free from all earthly concerns (*sannyasi*). This ideal scheme of life, while not widely observed in modern India, still has many devout followers. The four stages are carried out religiously under the lifelong direction of a guru.

Further information about the Yogoda Satsanga school in Ranchi is given in chapter 40.

Founding a Yoga School in Ranchi

secular and divine, for the youth of India), I arranged that most class instruction be given outdoors.

The Ranchi students are taught yoga meditation, and a unique system of health and physical development, *Yogoda*, whose principles I discovered in 1916.

Realizing that man's body is like an electric battery, I reasoned that it could be recharged with energy through the direct agency of the human will. As no action of any kind is possible without *willing*, man may avail himself of the prime mover, will, to renew his strength without burdensome apparatus or mechanical exercises. By the simple Yogoda techniques, one may consciously and instantly recharge his life force (centered in the medulla oblongata) from the unlimited supply of cosmic energy.

The boys at Ranchi responded well to Yogoda training, developing extraordinary ability to shift the life force from one part of the body to another part and to sit in perfect poise in difficult *asanas* (postures). They performed feats of strength and endurance that many powerful adults could not equal.

My youngest brother, Bishnu Charan Ghosh, joined the Ranchi school; later he became a noted physical culturist. He and one of his students travelled in 1938–39 to the West, giving exhibitions of strength and muscular control. Professors at Columbia University in New York and at many other universities in America and Europe were amazed by demonstrations of the power of the mind over the body.*

At the end of the first year in Ranchi, applications for admission had reached two thousand. But the school, which at that time was solely residential, could accommodate only a hundred. Instruction for day students was soon added.

In the Vidyalaya I had to play father-mother to the little children and to cope with many organizational difficulties. I often remembered Christ's words: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold

* Bishnu Charan Ghosh passed away on July 9, 1970, in Calcutta. (*Publisher's Note*)

now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."^{*}

Sri Yukteswar had interpreted these words as follows: "The devotee who forgoes the usual life experiences of marriage and family-rearing in order to assume greater responsibilities — those for society in general ("an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren") — performs a work that is often accompanied by persecution from a misunderstanding world. But such larger identifications help the devotee to overcome selfishness and bring him a divine reward."

One day my father arrived in Ranchi to bestow a paternal blessing, long withheld because I had hurt him by refusing his offer of a position with the Bengal-Nagpur Railway.

"Son," he said, "I am now reconciled to your choice in life. It gives me joy to see you amidst these happy, eager youngsters; you belong here rather than with the lifeless figures of railway time-tables." He waved toward a group of a dozen little ones who were tagging at my heels. "I had only eight children," he observed with twinkling eyes, "but I can feel for you!"

With twenty fertile acres at our disposal, the students, teachers, and I enjoyed daily periods of gardening and other outdoor work. We had many pets, including a young deer that was fairly idolized by the children. I, too, loved the fawn so much that I allowed it to sleep in my room. At the light of dawn the little creature would toddle over to my bed for a morning caress.

One day, because some business would require my attention in the town of Ranchi, I fed the pet earlier than usual. I told the boys not to feed the fawn until my return. One lad was disobedient and gave it a large quantity of milk. When I came back in the evening, sad news greeted me: "The fawn is nearly dead, through overfeeding."

In tears, I placed the apparently lifeless pet on my lap. I prayed piteously to God to spare its life. Hours later, the small creature

^{*} *Mark 10:29-30 (Bible).*

opened its eyes, stood up, and walked feebly. The whole school shouted for joy.

But a deep lesson came to me that night, one I can never forget. I stayed up with the fawn until two o'clock, when I fell asleep. The deer appeared in a dream, and spoke to me:

"You are holding me back. Please let me go; let me go!"

"All right," I answered in the dream.

I awoke immediately, and cried out, "Boys, the deer is dying!" The children rushed to my side.

I ran to the corner of the room where I had placed the pet. It made a last effort to rise, stumbled toward me, then dropped at my feet, dead.

According to the mass karma that guides and regulates the destinies of animals, the deer's life was over, and it was ready to progress to a higher form. But by my deep attachment, which I later realized was selfish, and by my fervent prayers, I had been able to hold it in the limitations of the animal form from which the soul was struggling for release. The soul of the deer made its plea in a dream because, without my loving permission, it either would not or could not go. As soon as I agreed, it departed.

All sorrow left me; I realized anew that God wants His children to love everything as a part of Him, and not to feel delusively that death ends all. The ignorant man sees only the unsurmountable wall of death, hiding, seemingly forever, his cherished friends. But the man of unattachment, he who loves others as expressions of the Lord, understands that at death the dear ones have only returned for a breathing space of joy in Him.

The Ranchi school grew from small and simple beginnings to an institution now well known in Bihar and Bengal. Many departments of the school are supported by voluntary contributions from those who rejoice in perpetuating the educational ideals of the rishis. Flourishing branch schools have been established in Midnapore and Lakhanpur.

The Ranchi headquarters maintains a Medical Department where medicines and the services of doctors are supplied without charge to the poor of the locality. The Vidyalyaya has made its mark, too, in competitive sports; and in the scholastic field, where many

Ranchi graduates have distinguished themselves in later university life.

In the past three decades the Ranchi school has been honoured by visits from many eminent men and women of East and West. Swami Pranabananda, the Banaras "saint with two bodies," came to Ranchi for a few days in 1918. As the great master viewed the picturesque classes under the trees, and saw in the evening that young boys were sitting motionless for hours in yoga meditation, he was profoundly moved.

"Joy comes to my heart," he said, "to see that Lahiri Mahasaya's ideals for the proper training of youth are being carried on in this institution. My guru's blessings be on it."

A young lad sitting by my side ventured to ask the great yogi a question.

"Sir," he said, "shall I be a monk? Is my life only for God?"

Though Swami Pranabananda smiled gently, his eyes were piercing the future.

"Child," he replied, "when you grow up, there is a beautiful bride waiting for you." (The boy did eventually marry, after having planned for years to enter the Swami Order.)

Some time after Swami Pranabananda had visited Ranchi, I accompanied my father to the house in Calcutta in which the yogi was temporarily staying. Pranabananda's prediction, made to me so many years before, came rushing to my mind: "I shall see you, with your father, later on."

As Father entered the swami's room, the great yogi rose from his seat and embraced my parent with loving respect.

"Bhagabati," he said, "what are you doing about yourself? Don't you see your son racing to the Infinite?" I blushed to hear his praise before my father. The swami went on, "You recall how often our blessed guru used to say: '*Banat, banat, ban jai.*'* So keep up *Kriya Yoga* ceaselessly, and reach the divine portals quickly."

* One of Lahiri Mahasaya's favourite remarks, with which he would encourage his students to persevere in meditation. It is literally: "Making, making, some day made." One may freely translate the thought as: "Striving, striving, one day behold! the Divine Goal."

The body of Pranabananda, which had appeared so well and strong during my amazing first visit to him in Banaras, now showed definite aging, though his posture was still admirably erect.

"Swamiji," I inquired, looking straight into his eyes, "please tell me: Aren't you feeling the advance of age? As the body is weakening, are your perceptions of God suffering any diminution?"

He smiled angelically. "The Beloved is more than ever with me now." His complete conviction overwhelmed my mind and soul. He went on, "I am still enjoying the two pensions — one from Bhagabati here, and one from above." Pointing his finger heavenward, for a short time the saint was transfixed in ecstasy, his face lit with a divine glow. An ample answer to my question!

Noticing that Pranabananda's room contained many plants and packages of seed, I asked their purpose.

"I have left Banaras permanently," he said, "and am now on my way to the Himalayas. There I shall open an ashram for my disciples. These seeds will produce spinach and a few other vegetables. My dear ones will live simply, spending their time in blissful God-union. Nothing else is necessary."

Father asked his brother disciple when he would return to Calcutta.

"Never again," the saint replied. "This year is the one in which Lahiri Mahasaya told me I would leave my beloved Banaras forever and go to the Himalayas, there to throw off my mortal frame."

My eyes filled with tears at his words, but the swami smiled tranquilly. He reminded me of a little heavenly child, sitting securely on the lap of the Divine Mother. The burden of the years has no ill effect on a great yogi's full possession of supreme spiritual powers. He is able to renew his body at will; yet sometimes he does not care to retard the aging process, but allows his karma to expend itself on the physical plane, using his present body as a time-saving device to preclude the necessity of working out remaining fragments of karma in a new incarnation.

Months later I met an old friend, Sanandan, who was one of Pranabananda's close disciples.

"My adorable guru is gone," he told me, amidst sobs. "He established a hermitage near Rishikesh, and gave us loving training.

When we were pretty well settled, and making rapid spiritual progress in his company, he proposed one day to feed a huge crowd from Rishikesh. I inquired why he wanted such a large number.

“‘This is my last festival ceremony,’ he said. I did not understand the full implications of his words.

“Pranabanandaji helped with the cooking of great amounts of food. We fed about 2000 guests. After the feast, he sat on a high platform and gave an inspired sermon on the Infinite. At the end, before the gaze of thousands, he turned to me, as I sat beside him on the dais, and spoke with unusual force.

“‘Sanandan, be prepared; I am going to kick the frame.’*
 “After a stunned silence, I cried loudly, ‘Master, don’t do it! Please, please don’t do it!’ The crowd remained silent, wondering at my words. Pranabanandaji smiled at me, but his eyes were already beholding Eternity.

“‘Be not selfish,’ he said, ‘nor grieve for me. I have been long cheerfully serving you all; now rejoice and wish me Godspeed. I go to meet my Cosmic Beloved.’ In a whisper Pranabanandaji added, ‘I shall be reborn shortly. After enjoying a brief period of the Infinite Bliss, I shall return to earth and join Babaji.† You shall soon know when and where my soul has been encased in a new body.’

“He cried again, ‘Sanandan, here I kick the frame by the second *Kriya Yoga*.‡’

* That is, give up the body.

† Lahiri Mahasaya’s guru, who is still living. (See chapter 33.)

‡ The actual technique used by Swami Pranabananda is known to higher *Kriya Yoga* initiates of the Yogoda Satsanga path as the Third *Kriya Yoga* Initiation. When given to Swami Pranabananda by Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya, it was the “second” *Kriya* he received from the Yogavatar. This *Kriya* enables the devotee who has mastered it to leave and return to the body consciously at any time. Advanced yogis use this *Kriya* technique during the last exit of death — a moment they invariably know beforehand.

Great yogis go “in and out” of the spiritual eye, the pranic star “door” of salvation. Christ said: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief [*maya* of delusion] cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [the Christ Consciousness] am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (*John* 10:9-10, Bible).

"He looked at the sea of faces before us, and gave a blessing. Directing his gaze inward to the spiritual eye, he became immobile. While the bewildered crowd thought he was meditating in an ecstatic state, he had already left the tabernacle of flesh and had plunged his soul into the cosmic vastness. The disciples touched his body, seated in the lotus posture, but it was no longer warm flesh. Only a stiffened frame remained; the tenant had fled to the immortal shore."

As Sanandan finished his recountal, I thought: "The blessed 'saint with two bodies' was dramatic in his death as in his life!"

I inquired where Pranabananda was to be reborn.

"I consider that information a sacred trust," Sanandan replied. "I should not tell it to anyone. Perhaps you may find out some other way."

Years later I discovered from Swami Keshabananda* that Pranabananda, a few years after his birth in a new body, had gone to Badrinarayan in the Himalayas, and there joined the group of saints around the great Babaji.

* My meeting with Keshabananda is described on pages 392-94.